

JUDAISM

THE EXPULSION FROM SPAIN A SYMPOSIUM Part I

JOSEPH DAN

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JUDAISM

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless — the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

1992 is the quincentennial anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and it is being commemorated by the Jewish world in a variety of ways. Lectures, concerts, academic conferences, special travel packages, books and articles are among this year's activities. JUDAISM Magazine, too, is making its contribution to this anniversary. This issue and the next one will deal with a variety of reactions to the Spanish experience. Though the articles appear in alphabetical sequence by the names of the authors, the first one, by *Joseph Dan*, by coincidence, presents a general background, while the succeeding ones, by *Abraham Gross*, *Daniel J. Lasker*, *Renée Levine Melammed*, *Gérard Nahon*, *Jacob J. Schacter* and *Raymond P. Scheindlin*, deal with the aftermath of the expulsion, and the Jewish reaction and accommodation to it wherever they finally settled.

As one looks at these various papers, one thing becomes evident. The expulsion did not lead to the disappearance of the Jewish people. What we see, instead, is a resilient adaptation to life in new areas of settlement, accompanied by significant contributions to the culture and welfare of the new countries of residence.

In the planning of this year's two special issues, the editors received valuable assistance from Bernard Dov Cooperman and Miriam Bodian. We wish to thank them for it.

R.B.W.

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The Epic of a Millennium: Judeo-Spanish Culture's Confrontations

JOSEPH DAN

THIS ESSAY IS AN ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE the culture of the Spanish-Jewish community, especially concerning its creativity in the fields of philosophy, ethics and mysticism, as a three-fold sequence of traumatic cultural confrontations between Judaism and the surrounding civilizations. It tries to view a millennium of Jewish-Spanish culture as the result of three historical upheavals: The Arabic conquest in the 8th century, the Christian re-conquest between the 12th and the 15th centuries, and the expulsion from Spain and the establishment of the "Spanish diaspora" in the 16th and 17th centuries. This millennium of cultural history gives us laboratory circumstances to examine the ways in which a culture confronts and reacts to drastic, even cataclysmic events in the world surrounding it, retaining and even strengthening its own sense of identity and uniqueness. There is no parallel in the vast panorama of Jewish cultural history to such a great, creative center being subjected to such far-reaching changes in the surrounding culture, and the dynamism and variety of the Jewish cultural responses. Especially important is the fact that these responses, while often including far-reaching changes, were expressed in many cases by holding fast, remaining loyal and holding on to aspects of religion, culture and ideas in spite of the turmoil prevailing around it. This is, I believe, a unique saga of cultural perseverance in a most dynamic and creative fashion, which, to a very large extent, can be taken as paradigmatic of Jewish cultural history as a whole.

The particular thesis which I would like to emphasize here is that the nature and the consequences of the first of these three encounters — the one between traditional Jewish civilization and the emerging Arab-Islamic one, especially between the 10th and the 12th centuries — had a profound impact on the nature and the results of the subsequent clashes with Christian and post-Exilic surrounding civilizations. The most important and meaningful foundations of Jewish-Spanish cultural identity, and the means by which it faced the external, non-Jewish civilization, were decided in the very beginning; the two more recent clashes were characterized by the results of the first one. Needless to say, a brief essay cannot cover but a small fraction of the aspects and variations of such a vast phenomenon. No attempt at an exhaustive

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treatment of any subject is offered here, and the number of exceptions to every generalization presented in the following pages is enormous. Yet, on this occasion of the half-millennium anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, some space may be given to attempts to span the centuries in very broad outlines and to seek the major phenomena which characterized a millennium of dramatic, profound cultural development.

I

Two basic facts characterized the first encounter between Jewish-Spanish civilization and the Arabic-Islamic one in the first centuries of the Middle Ages. One was the deep belief of Spanish Jews that they were the older, established representatives of a culture which was invaded from the outside by the Moslem hordes. Arabic civilization was regarded as the result of conquest, not of indigenous growth. Arabic civilization was regarded, therefore, as an intrusive one, and not the consequence of intrinsic development. This enabled the Jews to treat the new ideas, norms, language and science introduced by the Arabs from the point of view of a confrontation: The newcomers suggest this and that; we are free to choose whatever we like and deny whatever we like; it is an offering from the outside, which can be accepted or rejected. Of course, the physical conquest itself could not be rejected, but the amount of cultural acceptance and integration was, to a very large degree, the result of Jewish free choice.

The second crucial fact concerning the very beginning of the confrontation between Arab and Jewish civilizations in Spain was the Babylonian geonic precedent. Spain was not the first large Jewish cultural and religious center to be conquered by the Arabs. Others had succumbed to their power earlier, in *Erez Yisroel*, Egypt, North Africa and, most important, Babylonia — the most influential cultural center 'as far as Spanish Jewry was concerned. Spanish Judaism thus could learn and follow, if it so wished, the examples of other centers in their relationship to the conquering civilization.

The process of adaptation to the realities of Arab cultural ascendancy was almost parallel between Babylonia and Spain, the 10th century playing the most crucial role. Yet, because of the paramount religious authority of the geonic academies, they had the more important leadership position in formulating the characteristics of this process of integration. The key to this crucial chapter in the history of the Jewish-Moslem relationship was the attitude towards the Arabic language, the most powerful new instrument of a young, thriving civilization. What is Arabic? Is it a language of a religion, a church, or a civilization, including the secular aspects of a civilization? Should it be regarded as Hebrew's enemy and, simultaneously, as the enemy of Jewish culture

and religion, or should it be regarded as a representative of a civilization, a culture, with numerous aspects which do not infringe on Judaism and might even be used for its benefit? The Babylonian *geonim* (the heads of the principal rabbinic academies in Babylonia in the post-Talmudic period) made this choice in the clearest and most emphatic manner: Arabic should not be regarded as an enemy; rather, it can be most helpful, and can be integrated not only in "neutral" scientific and secular spheres, but into Jewish religious affairs as well. The fact that several *geonim*, most notably Rav Saadia Gaon and Rabbi Shemuel bar Ḥofni, used Arabic to write Jewish halakhic works — even Saadia's Jewish prayer-book was written in Arabic — made this language a legitimate one for Jewish culture, opening the possibility for Spanish Jews to go very far in integrating their own culture with the Arabic one.

This basic, elementary phenomenon stands out more clearly if it is compared to the Jewish attitude towards Latin, the other universal language closely connected with a religious structure. In European countries governed by Christianity, Latin was regarded as the language of a church, rather than of a people or a civilization. The Jewish hatred of Christianity engulfed Latin and its culture, making it inconceivable that this language would be used for Jewish cultural — and certainly not religious — purposes. Needless to say, we do not have any Jewish halakhic work written in Latin in that period, nor even any other kind of Jewish work; it is uncertain whether in those centuries there were a few Jews who knew some Latin. Attempts to prove that Jewish scholars and writers in medieval Germany knew Latin have mostly failed. While Jews were rather fluent in the local languages, especially French and German, and used them even in Biblical commentaries, they very seldom, if ever, used Latin. This created a gulf between Jewish culture and the surrounding one, a gulf which was never present in Arabic-speaking countries because of this early approval of the language by the great rabbinic academies in Babylonia.

The ambivalence which characterizes the relationship between Jewish traditional culture and the invading Arabic civilization in Spain is evident in the way the Arabic language was used. On the one hand, undoubtedly, it was embraced as the main language of scientific and philosophical expression (as well as the language for everyday business and personal needs); the great works of Jewish-Spanish intellectual endeavors were written in it. But the halakhists in Spain, for instance, did not follow the example of the *geonim* and did not make Arabic the language of Jewish law. Hebrew continued to prevail as the language of the halakhah. It may be said that Jewish-Spanish culture did not use to the hilt the opportunities opened to it by the geonic adoption of Arabic as a legitimate language for Jewish-religious affairs.

A more profound element of ambivalence is revealed by the way that Arabic was used. Scholarly studies of Jewish philosophy during

this period made great efforts to trace some influences of Jewish philosophers on Arabic ones and, indeed, several examples of such an impact can be identified. There is no symmetry, however, between the enormous influence of Arabic philosophy on Jewish philosophers, and the marginal ones in the other direction. The relationship, as far as philosophy is concerned, is almost completely one-sided: the Jewish philosophers followed closely all the major developments in Arabic philosophy, whereas we do not find a reciprocal attitude by Arab thinkers. This is not necessarily the result of an anti-Jewish bias; it is the direct consequence of the simple fact that Jewish philosophical works were written in Arabic, but in Hebrew characters, thus making them unintelligible to readers of the Arabic script alone.

By remaining loyal to the Hebrew letters, if not the language, the Jewish users of Arabic declared, in fact, that the works written in this way were an internal Jewish affair, and forfeited any opportunity to have them influence the Arabic civilization within which they created these works. The one-sidedness of the cultural relationship between the Jewish and Arab philosophers was one of choice, preferred by the Jews, and not of necessity. It was a clear declaration that Saadia, Halevi and Maimonides had no intention to have an impact on or shape Arab-Moslem culture. They wished to derive from it whatever they wanted and needed, but did not wish to intervene in the general scene of intellectual exchange. This does not express a wish to be integrated in a civilization; rather the opposite. If Jews in England and the United States today were to choose to write their thoughts in English with Hebrew characters, this would be regarded, correctly, as a withdrawal from the universal civilization in English rather than as integration. It seems to me that this is a clear expression of the ambivalence with which Jews treated their relationship with the surrounding culture: they were open to receive from it whatever was necessary and beneficial, but Jewish culture did not open itself for integration in the vast Arabic-Moslem civilization, engulfing most of the world from China to Catalonia.

An opposite example, testifying to the depth of Jewish integration in the new civilization, is to be found in the realm of Jewish ethics. Some of the most important works of the Jewish rationalists were dedicated to this field, creating a systematic structure to direct human behavior. Solomon ibn Gabirol in his *Tikkun Midot ha-Nefesh* ("Correction of Psychological Characteristics"), Bahya ibn Paqudah's *Hovot ha-Levavot* ("Duties of the Heart," undoubtedly one of the masterpieces of Jewish creativity in Spain), and Maimonides' celebrated *Shemonah Perakim* ("Eight Chapters"), are among the prominent examples, following Saadia's treatise on the subject in his last chapter in *Emunot ve-Deot*. The common denominator of these and other works is the assumption of the authors, in the very beginning of each treatise, that they are presenting the first comprehensive, systematic treatment of the subject.

The fact that ethics is the main subject of most of Jewish traditional culture, being central to the Talmud and the Midrash (and certainly the Bible itself), is hardly mentioned. All of these authors start by presenting basic scientific axioms, taken from the fields of theology, anthropology and psychology, and proceed to derive from them the main guidelines for human behavior. Some of them may introduce a verse here or there as an illustration, or briefly argue a possible contradiction with a talmudic saying, but, on the whole, they write as if Judaism was then and there confronting for the first time the problem of ethical behavior. This seems to be a clear statement that traditional Judaism, while it may have produced many anecdotes and epigrams on this subject, had not succeeded in presenting a proper treatment of it, that is, a scientific, rational one. Jewish ethics, written in Arabic in Moslem Spain, seemed — in its own eyes — to be a new departure, opening a new chapter in Jewish intellectual and ethical life. This attitude can be characterized, I believe, as the deepest penetration of Arabic civilization into the heart of Jewish tradition.

Despite the great impact that Arabic poetry, grammar and linguistics had on Jewish writers and grammarians, who created some of the most prevailing literary forms in Hebrew poetry and formulated Hebrew grammar as it is taught to this very day, it is important to point out that this was done from a position of equality. Jewish poets did not prefer Arabic to Hebrew: rather, they demonstrated, often with great success, that everything that can be done in Arabic could be done in Hebrew as well. Knowing the great pride and reverence that Arabs (and Moslems generally) have for Arabic as a superior language, this demonstration by Jewish poets and linguists can be viewed as a declaration of equality and independence. Hebrew is a Semitic language like Arabic, Jews seemed to be saying, and all possible structures of expression that are possible in one are possible in the other. There can be no doubt that Arabic civilization exerted great influence on Jewish creativity in these fields, but this influence did not result in submerging Hebrew under the impact of this confrontation. To the contrary, the expressions of pride at the possibilities offered by the Biblical language, when compared to those of the language of the Koran, are quite abundant in Jewish culture of the period.

The great lesson derived by Spanish-Jewish culture from its confrontation with Arab-Moslem civilization was that such a confrontation can occur without the destruction of the ancient, traditional cultural values. It is possible to benefit from such a cultural crisis without sacrificing that which tradition holds most sacred. This process of beneficial integration was carried out successfully, first and foremost, because of the relative tolerance of Judaism towards Islam, refusing to castigate it as idolatry or nonsense. The element of respect for the Islamic concept of divine unity, coupled with the legitimacy conferred on the Arabic

language by the Babylonian *geonim*, created an atmosphere which enabled devout Jews, holding strongly to their own traditions, to embrace the great vistas opened by Arabic science, literature and philosophy. Under the influence of this civilization, Judaism acquired its basic structuring into scientific and scholarly disciplines, as well as literary genres (which were previously united within the framework of the midrashic form). The benefits thus, were obvious, while the value of the Hebrew language, its letters, its grammar, and its literature were flourishing, and the basic Jewish religious traditions were not harmed in any way. It seems to be that this unique phenomenon gave Judaism a deep sense of equality when facing the external culture, and developed its self-confidence concerning a confrontation with other civilizations. These achievements became crucial when the next crisis approached, and Judaism in Spain came face to face with the re-conquering Christian culture.

II

It may seem paradoxical, but the earliest and most obvious characteristic of the change marking the transition from Islamic rule to a Christian one was the new relationship which developed between Spanish Jewry and Jewish culture in other countries under Christian domination, first in close-by and culturally related countries like Provence and Italy, and later with Jewish communities in central Europe. The obvious, external (though profoundly meaningful) expression of this new relationship is the transition to Hebrew as the language of science and philosophy.

The 12th century is the period in which this process gathered momentum, even though most of the characteristics of Jewish culture in Moslem Spain were still dominant. Ironically, perhaps, one of the key events which prepared Judaism for the era of Christian domination was the enormous translation endeavor of the Ibn Tibbon family, in the last third of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th. This enterprise made the masterpieces of Jewish culture in Moslem Spain available to Judaism as a whole, independent of any contact with Arabic and its culture. This treasure was thus prepared to continue to serve Spanish Jewry in the new era of Christian domination. This was but one link in a long chain. Jewish philosophers who travelled to Christian countries, or were aware of the cultural needs of their brethren in areas where Arabic was not known any more, started to write philosophical, scientific and ethical works in Hebrew rather than Arabic. The leaders in this field in the 12th century were Abraham bar Hijja and Abraham ibn Ezra, whose Hebrew works had a lasting impact on Jewish culture in Christian Spain as well as other Jewish centers. Segments of bar Hijja and ibn Ezra's work were known to Ashkenazi Hasidic writers in the

Rhineland in the late 12th century and early 13th, even before any knowledge of the Tibbonite translations reached them.

It is evident that the attitude towards Christianity among Spanish Jewish leaders was not meaningfully different from that of their brothers in western and central Europe. Latin did not replace Arabic as a cultural means of expression. The first reaction to the withdrawal of Arabic civilization and the onslaught of Christianity in the Iberian peninsula was the return to the Hebrew language as the main vehicle of cultural expression, and, as a direct consequence of that, the strengthening of the cultural bonds between Spanish Jewry and other Jewish communities which lived under Christian domination. The main center of gravity was moving from south to north: instead of looking southwards, towards the other Jewish communities in Arabic-speaking countries, Spanish Jews began to look northward, towards other Jewish communities in Christian countries. This entailed the return to Hebrew, and the translation of the great achievements of Jewish culture in Arabic into Hebrew.

Despite this meaningful process, the most striking phenomenon characterizing Jewish culture in Christian Spain is the absence of change. It seems that the greatest effort which was made by the leading writers of the 13th and 14th centuries was directed towards the preservation of the forms and norms of previous Jewish culture in the new circumstances. It is probable that more *maqamas* (narrative poetry) in Hebrew were written in Christian Spain and in Provence than in Moslem Spain. Most of the genres of literary expression, in their form and basic attitudes, were preserved throughout this period. Most important, rationalistic philosophy still reigned supreme, mostly in the forms that it received during the Moslem period. Thus, we can find a Jewish philosopher, Rabbi Jacob Anatoli, who was related to the Ibn Tibbon family in Provence, following in the footsteps of Maimonides, but writing his allegorizational commentary in Hebrew in the traditional form of *drush* (homiletics) and doing that in the court of the emperor Frederick II in Naples, discussing philosophical problems with the emperor and with the Christian theologian, Michael Scotus. Maimonidean rationalism thus lost its intrinsic contact with Arabic civilization, and became a universal Jewish philosophy, appropriate equally in a Moslem or Christian cultural background.

One of the most important contributions to this process was made even earlier by Maimonides himself, though his motives were probably completely different. His code of law, the *Mishneh Torah*, reflects a universalistic attitude, in a more emphatic manner than anyone did before in the field of halakhah (and probably no one equalled him later). This great achievement of Jewish-Spanish culture stands in stark contrast to the 10th and 11th-centuries' halakhic treatises in Arabic written by the *geonim*. Maimonides wrote his halakhic magnum opus in perfect

mishnaic Hebrew, closely integrated with all aspects of traditional Jewish culture, and the message that the work conveys is intended for all Jewish communities, everywhere and at all times. Maimonides intended to create the perfect, universal Hebrew code of law, which would guide Jews in all countries, whether under Christian or Moslem rule, and which would stand for eternity, even when messianic redemption would be achieved. In this way, within the work of Maimonides himself, we find side by side works which mark the deepest integration between Jewish and Arabic cultures, like the *Guide to the Perplexed* and the *Shemonah Perakim*, and his whole commentary on the Mishnah, written in Arabic and obviously disregarding by that fact anyone who is not part of that culture, together with the great code, which represents a universal concept of Judaism and intended for every Jew, written, naturally, in Hebrew.

Another aspect of this transition — probably the one with the greatest cultural impact — is the return of Spanish-Jewish culture to the traditional sphere of talmudic-midrashic culture. Maimonides' code is an example of that. When one compares Maimonidean ethics as presented, scientifically and systematically, in *Shemonah Perakim*, with the discussion of ethics in the first book of the code, *Sefer ha-Mada*, it is obvious that the author tried, in the Hebrew work, to integrate his ethical teachings in the language and spirit of the talmudic sages. This process began before Maimonides. The ethical work of Abraham bar Hijja, *Hegyon ha-Nefesh*, written in the first half of the 12th century, is presented in the form of a traditional *drush*, and was probably delivered in a synagogue during the Rosh ha-Shanah — Yom Kippur period, the Ten Days of Repentance. Bar Hijja was a rationalistic philosopher, whose sources include neo-Platonic philosophy which he accepted and followed, but his ethical teachings are presented in the traditional format, as if it were a direct continuation of ancient talmudic-midrashic culture.

These three lines of development converged in the creation of Jewish culture in Christian Spain: first, was the struggle to continue to support and develop all of the achievements of the culture of Moslem Spain — rationalistic philosophy, secular and sacred poetry, mathematics, physical sciences, linguistics — but now, those which had been previously expressed in Arabic were translated and continued their development in Hebrew; second, was the return to the ancient sources, a revival of talmudic-midrashic forms and ideas; and third, was the new universal attitude, creating links with other Jewish communities and cultural centers in Christian countries, using the Hebrew language as the common cultural means of expression. These three elements characterize all aspects of Jewish culture in Christian Spain; a few examples will clarify this analysis.

One of the most important events which took place during the

period of transition from Moslem to Christian Spain was the series of great controversies concerning rationalistic philosophy, mainly in the 13th century. On the surface, these polemics reflected a conflict between the ideology developed within the framework of Arabic civilization, and the more traditional, conservative world of Jewish centers which were not an integral part of that cultural integration, mainly those in Provence. While this may be true to some extent, it is not the whole truth. Every reader of the texts, the exchange of letters and arguments between the two sides, is struck by the almost complete absence of arguments concerning actual ideological or philosophical theses. The main subject discussed in the literature that these controversies produced is the question whether or not this or that rationalistic idea is supported by an ancient talmudic or midrashic statement. The issue under review is not whether the rationalists are right or wrong, but whether they follow and conform to traditional Jewish sources. Thus, most of this literature is exegetical in character: the opponents argue about the correct interpretation of talmudic sayings, rather than about the veracity of Aristotelian concepts. Both sides claim complete adherence to old traditions, and the arguments are intended to prove this orthodox attitude. No one suggests that the possibility even exists of deviating from the ancient norms; they compete with each other claiming to be the faithful followers of the talmudic sages. The controversy itself reflects the struggle between the heritage of Arabic civilization and the new circumstances under Christian rule, but the actual content of the controversy already testifies to the victory of the new traditionalistic attitude which became a central characteristic of the new phase in Jewish culture in Christian Spain.

The same phenomenon is evident when we examine the development of Jewish ethical literature in Christian Spain. Rationalists continued to write works on ethics in essentially the same way as their predecessors did in the previous period, but they did so in Hebrew. The change of language also brought on a change in literary genre and many characteristics of the treatises, tending to emphasize a closer connection to ancient rabbinic tradition. Several works were written in a homiletical, *drush*, format, and the reliance on quotations and references from the old sources increased considerably, even when the rationalistic ideology did not change. But, besides this continuation of the philosophical-ethical creativity, a new kind of ethical literature emerged in the first half of the 13th century: traditional ethical literature, which was essentially anti-rationalistic, and preached the return to the norms and values of the talmudic-midrashic world. The authors of these books often used the *drush* (homiletical) format, and some of their works tended to be systematic anthologies of the teachings of the ancient sages. This literary genre, which began to flourish in 13th-century Gerona, became increasingly important in Jewish-Spanish cul-

ture during the next centuries, some of its best works being written in the 15th century. Many of the authors of such works were kabbalists, though the kabbalah itself does not play a major part, at least externally, in the presentation of their ideas; they hardly use kabbalistic terminology and symbolism, and their mystical tendencies are often well-hidden.

The appearance of the kabbalah in Spain and Provence at the end of the 12th century is undoubtedly the most meaningful new aspect of Jewish culture which developed in Christian Spain. The full impact of the kabbalah was felt throughout the Jewish world only centuries later, after the expulsion from Spain, but even in the early 13th century the kabbalists did have some influence in creating the spiritual atmosphere which dominated the transition from Moslem to Christian Spain. The early kabbalists developed their ideas in very small, esoteric circles, first in Provence and later in Catalonia, their first important center being the one in Gerona in the first half of the 13th century, led by Rabbi Moses ben Naḥman (Naḥmanides). In the second half of that century, several kabbalistic circles appeared, especially in Castile, eventually recreating the great explosion of mystical creativity in Judaism in the last decades of the 13th century and the early ones of the 14th, "the age of the Zohar," the kabbalistic "golden age," which gave Judaism the book which joined the Bible and Talmud as the third most sacred work of Jewish religious expression.

The historical significance of the early kabbalah is revealed in the fact that it initiated, joined or strengthened the basic trends which characterize Jewish religious culture in Christian Spain. The kabbalists, for instance, were the leaders in the creation of the traditional ethical literature, based on the teachings of the talmudic sages, which is the most important change in this field when compared to Jewish ethics in Moslem Spain; writers like Rabbi Jonah Gerondi, Rabbi Jacob ben Sheshet, Naḥmanides himself — all members of the kabbalistic center in Gerona — are the main speakers in this new genre which became central to Judeo-Spanish culture. These and other kabbalists were, at the same time, among the most prominent leaders of the anti-rationalist movement which demanded a return to the values and norms of traditional Judaism against the reliance on Greek and Arab philosophy. In their cultural activity, in these two aspects of the culture of their times, the kabbalists did not appear publicly as mystics and did not preach their kabbalah; they did it as leaders and writers of the traditional, rabbinic trend within Judaism. The kabbalah, however, gave them the inner strength and complete spiritual conviction in the pursuance of these cultural goals.

The reason for their prominent role in leading traditionalism in Christian Spain is understandable. We, as scholars, may debate which were the sources from which the early kabbalah received its symbols and ideas, and attribute the emergence of the kabbalah to ancient or

medieval spiritual forces which combined to create this new phenomenon in Judaism. For the kabbalists themselves there was no question: for them, the kabbalah was a secret Jewish tradition, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and expressed in an esoteric manner in the Bible and the Talmud. The adherence to the kabbalah, for them, meant an immersion in an ancient, traditional Jewish mysticism, a return to the old Jewish sources, rather than following the new ones acquired during the Moslem period. The kabbalah was, for them, the re-emergence of the true, secret meaning of the ancient Jewish religious classics. It is no wonder that a great part of their literary endeavors were dedicated to exegesis of these sources; they wrote commentaries on Biblical texts, on the talmudic legends, on the ancient *Sefer Yezira* ("The Book of Creation"), and other such texts, being certain that they are not inventing anything new, but, rather, revealing the great spiritual depth inherent in the old traditions. In their own eyes they were the upholders of the old, defending it from the innovations that occurred during the previous period in the history of Judeo-Spanish culture.

This claim to direct continuity is expressed in various other ways by the early kabbalists. The very name "kabbalah" means nothing but "tradition," the secret, esoteric lore transmitted from generation to generation. Several kabbalists, from the author of the *Sefer Bahir* in the late 12th century to the Zohar in the late 13th century, actually attributed their works to talmudic sages, and other kabbalists (like the authors of the *Iyyun* works) attributed theirs to ancient figures and claimed to be an integral part of the ancient *Hekhalot* and *Merkabah* mystical tradition. The kabbalists developed legends explaining the transmission of their secrets from antiquity to their own times, especially in the works of Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen of Castile in the second half of the 13th century. They adopted, in many cases, the ancient ways of expression, especially the Midrash and the *drush*, imitating the forms of the old texts in the creation of their new ones. Thus, they represent a powerful attempt to link the new spiritual phenomena directly to the old talmudic tradition as its legitimate continuation.

It is very difficult to assign historical reasons to the mystical creativity of a few individuals, and to explain, in socio-cultural terms, why a mystical work was written in a certain time and place. I do not believe that the appearance of the kabbalah in Spain during this period of transition can, or should, be explained as a result of the spiritual processes of that time. It is a fact, however, that the works and ideas of the kabbalists, whatever their reason or origin, converged to strengthen processes which probably were in operation anyway: the turn to Hebrew as the language of Jewish culture, the emphasis on returning to traditional, talmudic values in ethics and in the Jewish world-view in general, the new importance of the *drush* form of expression, and the op-

position to Jewish rationalist philosophy in its attempt to base Jewish faith on ideas and values derived from the Greek-Arabic tradition.

It should be emphasized, however, that the early kabbalists did not entirely reject all that was achieved by the rationalists and their contribution to Jewish culture. The kabbalah itself is an expression of strong neo-Platonic spirituality, and several early kabbalists used philosophical terminology when formulating their mystical symbols. Some of the most central and powerful kabbalist symbols are actually transformations of philosophical ideas into mystical terms. These early kabbalists did not have any intention to erase and destroy the achievement of the Jewish thinkers of the previous era. What they actually did was to re-interpret and re-formulate many of these and integrate them into the new kabbalistic, old-new concept of Jewish spirituality. In this they succeeded. In the 17th century, for instance, although one can find philosophical terminology in Hebrew works, it is mostly in the books of the kabbalists, who continued to use them when the original ideological context of these terms was long forgotten. Thus, the kabbalah is an integral part of the great dual process of innovation and preservation, which characterizes Jewish culture in Christian Spain.

Another important cultural process of this period to which the kabbalists contributed most meaningfully was the creation of schools, or circles, of Jewish spiritual creativity. One of the most obvious phenomena of Jewish thought in Moslem Spain was that it was done by individuals, working independently. Great thinkers like Rabbi Baḥya ibn Paquda, Judah Halevi and Solomon ibn Gabirol are lonely figures; we do not know anything about their teachers, colleagues or disciples. They created great works, not great schools. In the 13th century, on the other hand, Jewish spiritual creativity tends to be organized in the form of schools or circles; this is certainly true concerning the kabbalistic groups in Provence, Catalonia and Castile, but it is also true concerning the rationalists in Provence and Spain. It is doubtful whether Maimonides can be described as leader of a "school" in the physical sense; the Tibbonites, on the other hand, represent a perfect example of such a phenomenon. It seems that this tendency became apparent first in Ashkenaz, in Northern France and the Rhineland in the 12th century, where such circles operated when Rabbi Abraham bar Hijja and Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra were still lonely writers. In the 13th century this new structure became dominant in Spain, engulfing kabbalists and non-kabbalists alike.

Despite the importance of the kabbalah, in itself and as an expression of the traditionalistic aspect in Judeo-Spanish culture, it should be remembered that throughout the Christian period, up to the age of the expulsion, rationalistic philosophy, in its different and diverging schools, was the ideological mainstream of Spanish Jewry. Its values shaped the educational emphases especially among the intellectuals and

upper classes, and its ideas were dominant in the spiritual atmosphere of Jewish culture during this long period. Thus, the element of continuity existed even when strong forces were operating in favor of change and new departures. Jewish culture in Christian Spain can therefore be described as one insisting strongly on the continuation of the main cultural aspects developed in the Moslem period, integrating them with the new phenomena and modifications necessary for the process of adaptation to the new circumstances, the new civilization that confronted the Jews in this era.

Besides these two main aspects — continuity and return to the talmudic, traditional values, and the links with other Jewish communities in Christian countries — Spanish Jewry developed in this period another dimension of its own culture, one of direct confrontation with the surrounding Christian civilization: criticisms and refutations of Christianity. Works directed against Christianity, its theology and its interpretations of the Bible, abound throughout the long periods of Jewish confrontation with that civilization, but undoubtedly Christian Spain is the place in which creativity in this sphere reached its peak. In the last few decades, much scholarly attention has been directed to the analysis of the main texts of the disputations between Jews and Christians, and our understanding of this phenomenon has increased considerably. Yet, culturally speaking, this attitude is expressed in many ways, not only in treatises dedicated to it. Jewish thinkers of this period, from Nahmanides to Joseph Albo, directed much of their work to the refutation of Christian ideas. It was impossible, during this period, to write a Biblical commentary without being aware of Christian exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and relating to it; indeed, one may surmise that at least one of the reasons for the great upsurge of creativity in the field of Biblical exegesis during the period of transition from Moslem to Christian Spain was the need to confront and refute Christian interpretations by the presentation of the Jewish alternative. Defending Judaism from the ideological onslaught of Christianity, and counter-attacking the rival religion, was undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of Judeo-Spanish culture throughout this period, creating a meaningful difference when compared to the previous era, in which criticism and refutation of Islam was never a central cultural subject, or necessity.

By the 15th century, despite the increasing hardships of Jewish life in Christian Spain, Jewish culture could present itself as having developed a viable, coherent and balanced unique culture, in which the traditional Jewish heritage was much stronger than in the Islamic period, but which preserved the main ideas, literary genres and scientific and scholarly achievements of the period in which Spanish Jewry was a part of Arab-Moslem civilization. The Jewish writers of this period accepted the traditional Jewish differentiation between Christianity and Islam, viewing Arab culture as religiously neutral and, therefore, open

to Jewish acceptance, whereas Christian culture was regarded as inimical and dangerous, from which one has to stay away, to be confronted and refuted when it tried to influence Jewish minds. We know that several Jewish scholars of this period were exposed to the influence of Christian theologians, and Christian scholastic schools did have some influence on the formulation of Jewish theological discussions. But the openness which marked Judaism's relationship with Islamic civilization could not return in the new era, and Judaism during these centuries developed a mostly independent cultural balance, absorbing and integrating the achievements of their fathers during the Moslem rule, and creating a new variety of Jewish cultural phenomena which could flourish and sustain Judaism in Christian Spain.

III

The third crisis in Judeo-Spanish history, the Expulsion of 1492, entailed not only a cultural upheaval but also geographic and physical ones. The unity of Spanish Jewry was brutally broken, and the new centers were engulfed by several new cultural circumstances, radically different from each other. It is hard to find a common denominator to the civilizations that the Spanish exile found in Italy, still flourishing in the Renaissance; in the western European great cultural upsurge of the 16th century, for instance, in Amsterdam; in the young Ottoman empire reaching its zenith in political power and cultural ascendancy; and in the remote, secluded small town of Safed, about to become a center of Jewish mysticism. In the previous crises, Spanish Jewry had to face one civilization; in this one, it had to become a part of half-dozen completely different societies, with different cultural directions, most of which were at that time young, vibrant and dynamic.

Without minimizing the importance of these circumstances, it is necessary to take into consideration that Spanish Jewry had to face these new challenges when it was badly hurt not only physically, by the cruelty and persecutions of the expulsion itself, but also spiritually, by the fact that so many Jews remained behind in the Iberian peninsula after converting to Christianity. The mass conversion of the Jewish upper class in Spain, a phenomenon prevalent among intellectuals and spiritual leaders, which grew during the 15th century and reached its peak during the expulsion and later when the Jews in Portugal, many of them exiled from Spain, were forcibly converted, presented Judeo-Spanish culture with existential questions. Some authors of that period compared this mass conversion to the Ashkenazi self-sacrifice (*kiddush ha-Shem*) during the persecutions by the Crusaders in the previous centuries, to conclude that something was essentially wrong in Jewish education and religious adherence. Rabbi Joseph Ya'abez and others claimed that Jewish rationalistic philosophy undermined Jewish ability

to withstand trials and to prevail in its Jewishness in the face of persecutions. According to them, rationalistic spiritualization of Jewish rituals, emphasizing internal, intellectual beliefs instead of the practical commandments of Judaism, enabled many Jews lightly to accept a situation in which they would pretend, externally, to be Christians, while retaining their Judaism deep in their hearts, and thus preserve their worldly possessions and positions in Spain. This problem was a personal one for almost every family of the exiled Spanish Jews, because almost everyone had a relative who remained in Spain, and was now threatened with exposure by the Inquisition. The horrors of the Inquisition trials and executions engulfed all Jews, but they could not forget that those who were tortured in Spain were the people who preferred conversion to exile, that the Inquisition was an internal Christian institution which had authority only over Christians, and thus its victims, in Jewish eyes, were not blameless. They were accused by their judges of being Jews, and at the same time they were blamed by their brethren abroad of being Christians. Time did not heal these wounds. During the 16th and 17th centuries a steady stream of refugees from Spain and Portugal reached the Jewish communities in other countries, Jews using every means of escape from the Iberian peninsula. Each such refugee represented the problem of how he or she should be treated by the Jewish communities: would they remember the suffering and adherence to Judaism which such persons expressed, or would they remember first and foremost the damning fact of the initial conversion to Christianity? These religious-cultural emotions became characteristic of Judeo-Spanish existence for a long time, undermining their cultural self-confidence and resulting in an increasing search for new ideas and ways of life which would fortify them against a repetition of past disasters.

The first and most prominent result of these concepts was the swift process in which, in the 16th century, rationalist philosophy lost its position as the leading Jewish ideology, to be replaced by the kabbalah as the major source of answers to religious questions. Throughout the Jewish world, the Zohar became, in the 16th century, a work quoted as often as any talmudic tractate or midrash. Kabbalists and non-kabbalists used it for any conceivable purpose. At the same time, many groups of creative, active kabbalists, often motivated by messianic aspirations, began to develop new ideas and symbols within the kabbalistic framework. The kabbalah became vibrant, dynamic, and deeply integrated in the various spiritual trends in 16th century Judaism.

The Jews exiled from Spain had a leading role in this process of self-criticism concerning Jewish philosophy and in the adoption of the kabbalah as the leading ideology for post-exilic Judaism. This can be regarded as one of the main avenues of response and confrontation with the calamity of the exile. Many of them migrated as far as Safed in the Upper Galilee, and created there a magnificent spiritual center,

which, in many respects, served as the focal point of the spiritual response to the edict of exile. New creative forces emerged among these scattered people and their direct descendants, forces which gave the Jewish people the authoritative code of law, Karo's *Beit Yosef* and *Shulhan Arukh*, as well as Moses Cordovero's commentary on the Zohar, *Or Yakar*, and the systematic summary of the kabbalah, *Pardes Rimonim*, two of the greatest achievements of Jewish spirituality of all times.

The major role that the Jews who were expelled from Spain played in the establishment of the new center in Safed represents one of the most important manifestations of the success of Spanish Jewry to overcome the trauma of the Expulsion and to create, together with other segments of Judaism, a new, viable and dynamic Jewish culture which could face the new cultural circumstances in the Ottoman Empire and in Europe. Similar processes can be seen at the same time in Amsterdam and in Smyrna, in Jerusalem and in Salonica. The destruction of the physical, geographic basis of Spanish Jewry did not put an end to Judeo-Spanish culture; it was one more crisis, the third one, which changed it and shaped it, but the thread of continuity is clear within the fabric of change.

Several cultural processes assisted Spanish Jews in their endeavor, the most important among them being the fact that every time that the exiles reached another Jewish community, they found prominent representatives of their own culture. Jewish rationalistic philosophy was in rapid decline, but it was replaced by the Spanish kabbalah. Maimonide's code of law was the most important halakhic work everywhere, and even most of its commentators and followers were Spanish. The format of the medieval Jewish sermon developed in Spain, and became universal. In the 16th century, a renewed interest in the *Kuzari* by Rabbi Judah Halevi is evident, and Spanish Jews certainly feel at home when this work is discussed. The major Biblical commentaries, used by Jews everywhere, were written by exegetes in Spain. The 16th century thus represents one more stage in the universalization of Judeo-Spanish culture, following processes which developed in previous centuries. In most places and in most respects the refugees from Spain were not cultural foreigners, and they certainly did not have any reason to view their own heritage as inferior to anything that they found in their new dwelling-places. Their culture was badly hurt by the expulsion and by the mass conversion of Spanish Jews, but it was not by any means vanquished. The Jews exiled from Spain received, immediately after the expulsion, every possible incentive to continue to develop their culture, in mysticism, ethics, homiletics, poetry, Biblical commentaries and, of course, the halakhah.

A second, more subtle positive factor was that of language. While there was never any doubt that Hebrew was the language of Jewish culture and worship, in most places of their exile the Spanish Jews did

not meet another cultural language which offered temptations which could compete with their wish to adhere to their own everyday language, namely Spanish. There was no great incentive to be integrated in the Arabic or Turkish of the Ottoman empire, nor in the vernaculars of Christian Europe. The Jews who lived before the expulsion in proximity to these cultures did not absorb them or integrate themselves in them (with the exception, to some degree, of Italian Jewry), and when the exiles from Spain came, there was no urgent need to acquire a new cultural language beyond the minimal needs of everyday contacts with the non-Jewish world, which could be kept, in many cases, on a very low level. Circumstances thus allowed Spanish Jews to remain loyal to their high culture in Hebrew and to Spanish as their home language. While they preserved Spanish in their community, Spanish preserved them, and gave them their independent identity, the sense of community, helped cherish memories of their great past, and, eventually, it became a language of literary creativity as well.

These and other factors made it possible for Judeo-Spanish culture to be integrated immediately after the expulsion in the establishment of the new Jewish cultural centers of the 16th century, while preserving its own identity and particular heritage. An authentic, intrinsically-coherent process of integration enabled the great cultural upsurge in that period in the Jewish communities in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Holland, Egypt, Jerusalem, Safed and other centers, creating the close cultural connections between the Jewish centers surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and as far north as Western Europe. Thus, the impact of the 16th and 17th century cultural developments in this area shaped Jewish culture in modern times, basing it on the twin centers of Eastern Europe on the one hand and Southern Europe, North Africa, Turkey and the Middle East on the other, while Western Europe served as the meeting-place of both of them. This structure, which was based on the Judeo-Spanish impact on the Jewish communities in the South, prevailed and characterized Judaism well into the 20th century.

Only brief outlines of this process of epic dimensions could be presented here. It seems to me that the story of the thousand years confrontation between Judeo-Spanish culture and the surrounding world, which included the greatest civilizations of that period, is one of the most meaningful and magnificent achievements of Jewish cultural history, only seldom paralleled even in the non-Jewish world. The historian of culture, ideas and religion is usually absorbed in the study of minute phenomena, and this is as it should be; sometimes, however, as in the case of the anniversary of the Expulsion, one should raise his head from the pile of manuscripts and notes on his desk and take a panoramic view of the process as whole.

The Expulsion and the Search for the Ten Tribes

ABRAHAM GROSS

THE EXPULSION FROM SPAIN PENETRATED the consciousness of the Jewish people more deeply than did the other medieval expulsions, such as those from England and France. The Sefarim themselves contributed to this by extensively commemorating the Expulsion in their writings. Jewish historiography saw it as a watershed and pivotal point for 16th century Jewish history. Some generalizations in most areas of research deserve a closer look.

In this article I would like to touch upon a complex issue which is part of the broader topic of messianism in that generation. Though a large corpus of material concerning the Ten Tribes was published by A. Neubauer some hundred years ago, the trenchant comment and comprehensive thesis about the extent of the influence of the Expulsion, was made by Gershom Scholem:

The classic compendia in which Issac Abravanel codified the Messianic doctrines of Judaism a few years after the Expulsion were soon followed by numerous epistles, tracts, homilies, and apocalyptic writings in which the repercussions of the catastrophe reached their most vigorous expression. In these writings . . . the redemptive character of the 1492 catastrophe was strongly emphasized. The birthpangs of the Messianic era . . . were therefore assumed to have set in with the Expulsion.¹

Scholem's view of the connection between the Kabbalah and messianism in this period, as well as the supposed influence of the Expulsion on the Kabbalah of the Ari (R. Isaac Luria) in Safed (three generations later), has recently come under criticism. I am going to touch only lightly upon the scholarly polemic over these points, since my main goal is to examine the extent to which, after the Expulsion, there is a change in the rumors about the Ten Tribes. Was there any intensification? And, if so, can it be attributed to the Expulsion? The chronological framework will be the 15th century up to the twenties of the 16th, marked by the appearance of David Reuveni.

The Tribes in Jewish Tradition — Rabbi Akiva and Eldad the Danite

The Mishnah, which usually deals with Halakhah only, discusses the future of the Ten Tribes.

The Ten Tribes are not destined to return, since it is said, "and [God] cast them into another land, as it is this day [Deut. 29:27]." Just as this day

1. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961), p. 247.

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passes and does not return, so have they gone their way and will not return, says Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer says: "Just as this day is dark and then grows light, so the Ten Tribes, for whom it is now the dark — so in the future it is destined to grow light for them." (Sanhedrin 10,3)

Whatever the reasons for R. Akiva's position, it seems, from the Talmud, that it was not the accepted one. In the Middle Ages it was virtually ignored by Jewish scholars and, when it is mentioned, it is only in disagreement. Thus, Don Isaac Abravanel starts his long discussion of the issue by presenting the problematics of this point of view: "And this is very strange; how could Rabbi Akiva deny all the prophecies . . ." His conclusion is that, "Indeed, Rabbi Eliezer's opinion is much clearer and in accord with the prophecies."² The question, then, is how can Jewish tradition ignore the opinion of the one person who was considered to be the greatest scholar of the Mishnaic period?

The answer must be given on two levels. The gloomy reality of the destruction of the Temple and the long Exile, with its continuous pressures, inevitably created a psychological state and, sometimes, the existential needs of individuals and communities for something to enable them to resist conversion. The difficult and painful question that penetrated the innermost soul of the medieval Jew was: How is it possible that God has forsaken his people for so long, if they are, indeed, the chosen ones? Why were they stripped of their independence? Why is the chariot of the Messiah so long in coming, already more than one thousand years? The low state of the Jews for so long proved, according to the Church, that God's abandonment of Israel is permanent. It was this argument that seemingly won for Christianity most of its Jewish converts. The Jews, for their part, tried to show that the promise of "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" was still kept in an institution such as the *Reish Galuta* (the leader of the Jews in the diaspora) in Baghdad (believed to be a descendant of the Davidic dynasty), in the kingdom of Khazaria, or even in the *Rab de la Corte*, the official Rabbi and leader of the Jews in Castile.

No wonder, then, that the Jews could not "give up" on the Tribes. Against "our adversaries," and in order to counter internal doubts, Rabbi Abraham ibn Migash writes in the 16th century:

. . . and there, there were kings and dignitaries such as in the land of Falasha in Abyssinia, about whom it is said that he is a great and mighty king among kings . . . and I have written this to say that . . . He kept His word . . . the sceptre shall not depart from Judah.³

The historical personality who removed doubts about the survival of the Tribes was a man who assumed the name of Eldad and appeared in the 9th century, claiming that he was from the tribe of Dan. According to him, the Tribes live separately in complete independence, ruling other

2. Isaac Abravanel, *Yeshu'ot Meshiho* (Königsberg, 1861), pp. 30b, 33b.

3. Rabbi Abraham ibn Migash, *Kevod Elohim* (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 124a-b.

people, who pay them tributes. They are courageous, wealthy, and morally impeccable. Their main occupation is the study of the Torah. Each tribe contributes in a unique way and in that manner helps to create a perfect existence. Eldad painted them in bold, idealistic colors, thus transforming them from an abstract literary entity found in the Midrashic literature into a vivid group with defined characteristics. On the other hand, with the same stroke of Eldad's quill, the Tribes became a supreme, though remote, entity for the medieval Jews under the pressing yoke of Edom or Ishmael. For this Jew, the Tribes symbolized the antithesis of the Jewish existence experienced by him and his brethren. At any rate, Eldad brought the Tribes closer to the consciousness of the Jews, who would keep their memory in their hearts until the coming of the Redemption.

Against this double background of the psychological needs of the medieval Jew and the fabulous tale of Eldad, we can understand why the existence of the Tribes, their different mode of living, and their eventual return, were not doubted. Their return was already linked in the early Midrash with the process of Redemption, as is evident in the history of Messianism. The interesting thing is that, on the wings of human nature, this story was carried beyond the confines of Judaism, and penetrated the walls of Christianity. We refer to the plausible suggestion that the Eldad story supplied the material for the parallel imaginary Christian creation — the legend of Prester John (henceforth referred to as PJ).⁴

Prester John — A History of a Legend

In 1165, we encounter a letter that had been supposedly sent by the Christian priest-king of India — Prester John — to the Byzantine Emperor, Manuel Comnenus. We read there of his land, which is rich in precious stones and exotic animals. No adultery, thefts, or any other social crimes are to be found there. The more important news contained in the letter tells of PJ's vow to lead his huge army to conquer the Holy Sepulchre, handing a crushing defeat to the Moslem infidels.

It did not take long before this legend gained immense popularity all over Europe. The military might of PJ was of significance during the period when the Second Crusade was plundering, and the possibility that the Moslems would be attacked from behind by the Christian monarch was tempting, indeed. In addition, against the background of corruption in the Church, PJ was seen as "an ideal Pope in an ideal society, in which there exist ideal relations between Church and State."⁵

The letter also mentions the Ten Tribes, who live peacefully as neighbors of PJ's kingdom but must pay him an annual tribute. This element

4. E. Ullendorff, *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 1, 157.

5. Francis M. Rogers, *The Travels of the Infante Dom Pedro of Portugal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 101, 217.

in the letter can be seen as the Christian answer to the Eldad story, i.e., that the Tribes are not independent. It is also possible that the anonymous composer could not envision a perfect Christian kingdom that had no dominion over Jews. It is noteworthy that this letter had its influence on the Jews and, as early as the end of the 13th century, we find it quoted by a Jewish author in France.

For 150 years this kingdom was believed to be in India, but, in the beginning of the 14th century, following contacts with Ethiopian Christians, Europe started to identify it with Ethiopia, which was considered to be part of greater India.⁶ As the commercial ties with the East grew, Ethiopia, crowned with the PJ legend, became all the more important in the awareness of Catholic Europe.

Rome and Ethiopia

As far as the Church is concerned, the first half of the 15th century is characterized by the attempts to unify Greek and Latin Christianity. These efforts were central during the offices of Pope Martin V (1417-1431) and his successor, Eugenius IV. The most notable and concentrated attempt was made in the Council that started in Ferrara (1438), moved to Florence (1439-1442), and continued in Rome for three more years. Due to political problems, Pope Eugenius left Rome, and, from 1436, lived in Bologna, where he met a Castilian traveller named Pero Tafur. The latter tells us that the Pope granted him an audience, and blessed his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It is likely that he was asked to collect information concerning Christians in the East, as previous Popes had asked of such travellers.

Tafur reached Palestine, then continued to Egypt and Mount Sinai. He had meant to travel to the Far East, but he met a caravan with a Venetian named Nicolo Conti. Conti, who had converted to Islam, presented himself as one who had lived in India for 40 years, where he had married a woman given to him by PJ.⁷ He described PJ and his people as good Catholics. Tafur left Conti in Egypt and returned to Venice in May, 1438, and from there continued to Ferrara, where the Pope questioned him about his travels. It is interesting to note that in June, only a month after that meeting took place, Pope Eugenius wrote a letter to PJ urging him to send a delegate to the Council.

The next Pope, Pius II, was elected in 1458. As is well known, Constantinople, the center of Eastern Christendom, had fallen into the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1453. This Pope did not write any further letters to PJ. On the other hand, we find a published letter of his (between 1469-1472) to Mehmet II, the Turkish Sultan, in which — amazingly — he tries to convince him to convert to Christianity. Pius explains:

6. O.G.S. Crawford, *Ethiopian Itineraries Circa 1400-1524* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 212-15.

7. Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439* (London, 1926), p. 85.

What do you think the weak lord of the Egyptians will do when he sees that you are converted? And the unwarlike Arab? And the naked African? Moreover, all of these are at the mercy of the Ethiopians, relatives of PJ, who is a Christian. They will not be able to resist either them or the other Christians. The Ethiopians can cut off the water of the Nile and scatter it, so that, breaking the dikes, it inundates and submerges the whole of Egypt whenever Arcturus appears in the sky.⁸

It is impossible to understand this pathetic letter without the background of the growing fear, indeed panic, that had enveloped the leaders of Catholic Europe after the conquest of Constantinople.

Italy as an "Information Center" Concerning Ethiopia

When one speaks of Africa and the Far East in our period, the name of the European country that comes to mind is Portugal. But one ought to know that, as far as information about these relative unknown geographical areas is concerned, Italy had a central role as a European information center, serving as the reservoir into which most of the information flowed. Most of the contacts between Europe and the ports in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea were controlled by the Italian Republics — mainly by Venice, which was the most important naval and commercial power in that sea. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when the access of Christian Europe to the Black Sea was blocked, there remained two important ports from which the Venetians continued to draw the treasures of the East — Beirut and Alexandria. The latter was more important by far, being the trade center for spices.⁹ One should also mention Jaffa, which served as the port for pilgrims headed for Jerusalem. The information that Europe received was based primarily on reports of merchants and pilgrims who arrived in Italy, mainly Venice, aboard Italian ships.

We already hear of contacts with Ethiopia in the 14th century. We know of at least three people from Genoa, Venice, and Florence who reached Ethiopia and returned to Italy. However, tangible information was received only toward the middle of the 15th century. In 1441, the delegates of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem to the Council on Christian Unity arrived in Florence. It is probable that they were questioned about their customs and lifestyle in their homeland. After all, the purpose of their arrival was to examine the identity of their Christian faith and practice, and the differences between that and Catholicism.

The Ottoman conquest left Egypt as the sole outlet of communication with the Far East and, therefore, it was of economical import to gather knowledge about Ethiopia, a potential source of commercial activity as well as a land through which one might find routes to the East. In addi-

8. Francis M. Rogers, *The Quest for Eastern Christians* (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 76.

9. H.F.M. Prescott, *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1954), p. 16.

tion, there was a constant interest in PJ as an ally against the ever-growing and threatening Ottoman Empire.

In 1524, Allesandro Zorzi of Venice completed his collection of accounts concerning the routes to Ethiopia, a project that had occupied him for fifty years. Some of the reports are by Italians, but most of his sources were Ethiopian monks who had come to Venice and were interrogated by him. Such was, for example, the Dominican Fra Zorgi, who left Jerusalem after his convent was destroyed by the Ottoman Turks. In 1519 he had given Zorzi the account of his travels from Prester John's Ethiopia to Jerusalem.

Portugal and PJ

The connection of this small nation to our topic starts with the 1415 conquest of Ceuta, the African port, south of the Gibraltar Strait. This event of Portuguese-Christian expansion in Africa, and the conquest of a Moslem stronghold, profoundly influenced the lives of the two princes, Enrique and Pedro. Enrique, the more famous of the two, turned to the south, choosing the route of nautical explorations, with an eye toward the East. Pedro, in contrast, embarked on a trip to the East through Europe. The aim of both princes was, to a large degree, a religious one, namely, finding a way to fend off the Ottomans. Both hoped to reach PJ in order to unite with him against the infidels. This was the cradle of the rebirth of Portugal, which adopted a unique mission and destiny — expanding the geographical horizons of Christendom.

One of the most important expeditions to create the contact with PJ was that of Bartholomeu Dias in 1487. In the same year, the Portuguese king, Joao II, sent Pero da Covilha and Afonso de Faiva to the East, but by land through Egypt. At some point they parted ways. Covilha continued to India, while Favia headed for Ethiopia and PJ. They decided to meet in Cairo. Covilha returned there only to find out that Faiva had died. Meanwhile, when Joao II realized that his people did not return, he dispatched two Portuguese Jews to find them. The seemingly "odd couple" were Rabbi Abraham of Beja and Joseph, a shoemaker from Lamego. The fact that the king sent Jews should not be surprising since their connections with Jewish communities along the route was a distinct advantage, aside from the usual better knowledge of Oriental languages that they possessed. Moreover, about Joseph we read that he had recently returned from Baghdad and gathered information about Hormuz, an important name in the spice-route, so that he was an experienced person in such undertakings. The two Jews did, indeed, meet Covilha in Cairo. They instructed him to write a report of his trip and his findings for Joao II, which he promptly did and sent it with Joseph.¹⁰ In accord with Joao's

10. The letter has not been found to date. C.F. Beckingham, "The Quest for Prester John," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 62 (1980): 305-10.

orders, Covilha went back with Rabbi Abraham to Hormuz, so that the latter might be able to give an eyewitness report of it. From there he crossed the Red Sea and reached PJ's court, where he was found thirty years later by the first official Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia.¹¹

The Press and "PJ's Fever"

To a large extent the press was responsible for the vast interest in PJ since the 70s of the 15th century. Then, as now, it published what was profitable. It is clear that publishing PJ-related material was considered a good way of making a living. The short tracts were snatched up by the reading public who wanted to quench its thirst for information about the enchanted Christian kingdom. Starting in the 70s, we find publications of the PJ letter, the travels of Marco Polo, Sir John Mandeville and Ludolphus de Suchen,¹² new stories in prose or rhyme, classical and new geographical tracts, reports on embassies to Africa and the Far East, etc. All of the major European press centers are represented in this effort, among which figure Rome, Venice, Strasbourg, Cologne, and Paris.¹³

It is time now to return to the Jewish side of the coin, in order to see the extent of the parallelism between Europe's PJ and what was taking place within the four ells of Judaism with its specific worries and hopes.

Rumors About the Ten Tribes in the 15th Century

The events that are considered to be the turning point in the history of the Jews in Spain are the pogroms of 1391, which left a trail of death and destruction in scores of Jewish communities. The devastated Jewish center of Spain suffered not only the death of thousands, but also a mass conversion to Christianity, thus creating the problem of the *anusim*, or *conversos*, which ultimately brought about the Expulsion one hundred years later.

In 1391, a Jewish scholar by the name of Solomon Halevi also converted and, after a short time, he became the bishop of Burgos. We have a letter sent to Halevi by Joshua Lorki, a friend, contemplating the reason for the decision to convert. Lorki analyzes the theoretical motivations for conversion, one of which is despair and loss of hope for redemption due to the extended length of the Exile and the press of suffering. He rejects this reason as not applicable in Halevi's case, since the sufferings at the hands of the Christians are limited to only a fraction of the Jewish nation, that which resides in Europe:

11. Francisco Alvares, *The Prester John of the Indies*, C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford eds., (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 369-76.

12. Columbus owned a set of these three authors, that was published between 1483-85, and in his notes he referred to PJ twice.

13. Rogers, *Quest*, pp. 185-193.

Also we hear from merchants who go by nautical routes that the majority of our nation is in Babylon and Yemen . . . in addition to those who live in Persia and Medea from the exile of Samaria, who are numerous as the sand of the sea-shore . . . in provinces where no other nation governs them, like those who live in the end of the land of the Negroes . . . with the Edomite king who is called PJ, and they make a treaty with him, an annual treaty, a fact that is beyond any doubt . . .¹⁴

Some twenty years later Lorki himself converted. It has been suggested that, when he wrote to Halevi, he had already had his share of doubts about who really is *verus Israel*. However, this particular argument, though perhaps not very consoling for a suffering Jew in Spain, does not seem to be a specious one as far as its "historical" basis is concerned. Lorki talks about the merchants who are the source of knowledge about the Tribes. We do know of such merchants from Catalonia who traded with the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean, from where some might have continued to Ethiopia, or might have heard from others who had. It is also clear from the letter that Halevi had the same information, which might have been common knowledge.

Another letter, written in 1433, teaches us of a "fact finding mission" comprised of two Jews who were asked by their community in the vicinity of Rome to clarify the truth about the rumors that had reached the court of the Pope (probably Martin V in 1419) concerning the Ten Tribes. We learn from that cryptic letter that, according to the rumors, the Tribes had crossed the legendary river Sambatyon and ravaged their enemies, "and the rumor reached the Pope, who is in our province, and 'the peoples heard, [and] they trembled'" [Ex.15:14].¹⁵

The writer hints that he must conceal the details of the rumors out of fear of the Christians. It was the Jews' understanding that the Pope's court was in a panic because the Tribes, according to the classic PJ letter, had been staying put because PJ had been blocking their way, whereas the rumor now informing the Pope that the Tribes had crossed the river and defeated their enemies actually meant the defeat of PJ. Let us recall that, in this period, the interest in the Christian kingdom in Ethiopia was gaining a great momentum in European courts, primarily because of the Ottoman threat. It is plausible to suggest that the rumors contain an echo of the wars between the Ethiopians and the Falasha, that started in the 14th century and continued, off and on, for some three hundred years.

And, indeed, one of those two Jews of the "fact finding mission" is the one known as Rabbi Elija of Ferrara. In 1435, from Jerusalem, he wrote a letter to his sons telling them:

I believe I have already written to you what I was told by a young Jewish man about the Jews in the place he had come from, that they are sovereign

14. L. Landau, *Das Apologetische Schreiben des Josua Lorki an den Abtrünnigen Don Salomon ha-Levi* (Antwerpen, 1906), pp. 2-3.

15. J. Hacker, "Rabbi Elija of Massa Lombarda in Jerusalem" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 50, (1985): 253.

... and around them there is a great nation called Abyssinians who wear the cross on their faces, and they always fight ...¹⁶

This is the first explicit reference to the Ethiopian-Falasha wars, about which Rabbi Elia learnt from a young Falasha.

In the next fifty years there are more letters from Jerusalem referring to the Jews of Ethiopia. Among these, the letters of Rabbi Ovadia of Bertinoro, written in the 80s, are of special interest, not only because of the stature of the writer, but because of the critical manner in which he accepts and transmits information about the land.

And in this city there are people from all nations ... and from the lands of PJ, Ishmaelites and Christians ... and I gave a sermon regarding the river Sambatyon. And what you hear there [i.e. Italy] is exactly what I have heard here. There is nothing clear, only second hand rumors. What I did find out, and I have no doubt about it whatsoever, is that on one of the borders of PJ ... there are many Jews ... in the end, due to sinning, PJ was able to overcome them ... he entered their lands and destroyed and devastated ... but now they say that ... they have recovered and multiplied. And they still pay PJ tribute, but are not subordinate as before ... and recently, every day, Christians who come from PJ's country tell us that those Jews ... PJ dealt them a mighty blow, and we fear lest this is true, for the rumor is growing stronger and stronger.¹⁷

Ovadia's letters, as well as the letters of other Jews from Jerusalem to Italy, show how much the Jews in Italy yearned for information about the Tribes, and how regular were the contacts between Ethiopia and Jerusalem.

The Italian Jews, who were in the forefront of the news, tried to verify the rumors from the opposite geographical side. They apparently wrote a letter to the Jews in Spain asking several questions about their customs, etc. The answer includes a section concerning Sambatyon and the rumors. The style is very cryptic, and the general message is that the rumors, coming from Portugal — for the Portuguese sent a "mighty navy" to the area of the Sambatyon — are constant, yet they are no more than rumors.

As befitting responsible people who have assumed the leadership of the Jews of Spain, the answer is restrained and cautious, revealing a bit but concealing much more.¹⁸ Yet, it is abundantly clear that the Jews in Spain, like the Jews in Italy, kept ears open, hopefully looking southward, toward Portugal's "mighty navy." Again, Christians, like the Jews in Iberia, waited with tense anticipation for the news — the former, from PJ, and the latter, from the Tribes. Both glanced to the East, to the ever-strengthening Ottomans — the former, with fear, and the latter, with hope.

16. Ibid. p. 260. We are using the term Falasha for the Jews of Ethiopia, although it might have been in use only from the 16th century.

17. A. Ya'ari, *Letters from the Land of Israel* [in Hebrew], pp. 133, 141.

18. F. Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien II* (Berlin, 1936), p. 385.

The Conquest of Constantinople, Messianism, the Tribes and PJ

We have already seen that the political-military situation of Christianity vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire occupied much space in the thoughts and consciousness of the leaders of Catholic Europe in the course of the 15th century. For the Jews, as far as we can judge from the available evidence, there was one particular event that caused a rapid flow of messianic adrenalin in their veins. Yizhak Baer named his famous article: "The Messianic Movement in Spain in the Period of the Expulsion," and talked about "several conspicuous marks of a great messianic movement among Marranos and Jews, a movement that started in the middle of the 15th century."¹⁹ The term "movement" might be somewhat exaggerated, and correct only in reference to the Marranos after the Expulsion, as we shall see below; but a "tense anticipation" of the advent of the Messiah, or a messianic "awakening," certainly existed, and not only in Spain. As shown by Baer, the source of hope rested in the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

This event was comparable to an earthquake. The wave of eschatological calculations referring to that year as a milestone in the process of redemption continued for at least 80 years. Baer cites Spanish documents of the 1460s that show how profound an effect the conquest had on the rising hopes of the Marranos for a speedy redemption from the oppressing yoke of Christianity. The climax of those emotions came around 1500, with the appearance of a young Marrano prophetess from Herrera who had many enthusiastic followers, until the Inquisition extinguished that messianic flame with flames of its own.

But, as could be expected, the excitement was not unique to the Jews of Spain, although the problems of the Marranos created a fertile background for the sprouting of messianic hopes. It would be natural to expect that, in other places, closer geographically to the battlefields, where the news was much fresher, Jews would be occupied with rumors concerning the military developments and deducing religious-messianic conclusions. Indeed, in 1455, a letter expressing the mood right after the conquest of Constantinople, was sent from Jerusalem to Italy. Its importance lies in the fact that it contains all the motifs that would characterize similar letters of the next 70 years.

The scholars of Jerusalem who signed the letter, open by reporting "the rumors and good tidings" connected with the Ottoman success. They tell of the exciting news that the Sambatyon has dried up and that the Tribes are engaged in a successful military campaign against PJ. This is followed by stories of a series of miracles that occurred on the Temple Mount and frightened the Moslems there. The letter goes on to explain that, during the "birthpangs of the Messiah," most of the Jews who do not live in the Holy Land will suffer and will not live to see the final redemption unless they repent and assist the community in Jerusalem that pres-

19. *Me'asef Zion* 5 (Jerusalem, 1933): 71.

ently suffers for the sake of the whole nation. Those who contribute will be mentioned every Sabbath at one of the holy sites. Needless to say, the letter was sent to Italy with a person whose task it was to raise money for the Jewish community in Jerusalem.²⁰

Here, then, we have correspondence that reports about signs of redemption on three fronts; the Islam-Christendom wars, the Tribes-PJ wars, and heavenly signs in Jerusalem which, in a symbolic manner, tell of the end of the two major religions, coupled with the rise of the Jewish nation. The Jews in Jerusalem believe themselves to be at the center of events (for "From Zion shall come forth rumor, and the word of redemption from Jerusalem . . ."), and, as the representatives of the nation, they feel it their right to ask for charity, because he who aids them indeed aids himself. In addition to the historically authentic background of the messianic ferment, one must note that the center of Torah study in Jerusalem had a very clear interest in keeping the rumors alive by circulating them regularly.

Rumors After the Expulsion

We shall examine the situation after the Expulsion through two major messianic figures from among the exiles. The first is Rabbi Isaac Abravanel, whose messianic thought was recorded in three tracts. The second is Rabbi Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi, who arrived in Jerusalem whence he sent several messianic letters in which the Tribes have a prominent place.

Abravanel

Although almost every exegete or moralist of Sefardi origin, who wrote during this generation, refers to the Tribes, none can be compared to Abravanel. This Jewish leader, probably the most famous and acknowledged of that period, painted in his messianic trilogy a complete, apocalyptic picture of the coming redemption. He even gave his readers his calculations as to the precise dates of its stages. As to the motif of the Tribes in his writings, it has been said that,

... it is only in the writings of Abravanel that we find the legend of the Ten Tribes transformed from a phantom into a factor. Only in Abravanel's messianic scheme do we find them playing an active role in the history of Israel and the world.²¹

If we find a novelty here at all, it lies only in the systematic manner of presentation, as compared with former thinkers. From the sources reviewed above it becomes abundantly evident that the popular expecta-

20. A. Neubauer, "Literature Concerning the Ten Tribes" [in Hebrew], *Qovez al Yad* 4 (Berlin, 1888): 46-50.

21. B. Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel, Statesman and Philosopher* (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 229.

tions for the intervention of the Tribes in the global order were generally a legacy of the people of the 15th century. It would, therefore, be more precise to say that Abravanel included the ideas and hopes that had spread in previous generations in a "messianic codification" framework.

He sees three curses in Exile: the lack of courage, of honor, and of government. All of these elements, which, in their positive form, are missing in the unnatural, exilic existence of the Jews living under the rule of Christendom and Islam, are to be found in the Tribes. Indeed, the natural state of affairs will be restored to the Jews once the Tribes will intervene in the war of revenge against the nations, and the suffering Jews will be liberated. Here, again, there is no novelty. Abravanel merely formulates the psychological reasons behind the popular Jewish preoccupation with the legends about the Tribes. He is appropriating popular ideas and installing them into the complete messianic scheme which he presents to his reader. His contribution is in the neat and systematic presentation of his analysis of the curses of Exile.

In several places one can see the influence of the new information supplied by the Portuguese explorers. One interesting paragraph refers to the supposed custom of the "Indians," i.e., the Ethiopians, who perform baptism not by water but by fire, namely, to make the "sign of acceptance of their religion by fire burns on the face and the arms."²² This reflects popular beliefs about the Ethiopians throughout Europe. Abravanel explains that the prophet Isaiah promised that the Jewish forced converts would not be affected by their conversions, and would continue to be considered part of the Jewish nation. It is quite possible that Abravanel refers here to the forced conversions of the Falasha when they were defeated by the Ethiopians in the continuing wars between them.

In sum, Abravanel's contribution to our subject and in the broader area of Messianism should be seen mainly in his "codification" of accepted and well-known ideas, with emphases of his own. His authoritativeness as a political and spiritual leader produced, in turn, an influence that flowed from his writings back to the people, who found in them the words of an authority confirming their own beliefs. The Expulsion was the background and direct cause for Abravanel's decision to put his messianic thoughts into writing, believing that he was experiencing the unavoidable suffering of the first stages of the coming redemption, and reacting to the need to elevate the morale of the exiles, some of whom had sunk into profound despair. It was Abravanel's evaluation that there was a concrete danger of succumbing to the influence of Christian interpretations of some sensitive prophecies and, that out of despair, due to the heavy mental pressure, some of the exiles might be driven to the brink of conversion. As he saw it, it was his duty as a leader to thwart this possibility. This is perhaps in contrast to the great halakhic authorities of that generation,

22. Isaac Abravanel, *Mashmi'a Yeshu'a* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 467.

from whom we do not hear any reactions to the messianic rumors. They apparently saw their silence on such matters as more befitting the circumstances.

Rabbi Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi

Halevi was crowned by G. Scholem as the “head of the kabbalistic apocalypics, who paved the way for Rabbi Shlomo Molkho and his like.”²³ His literary activity in the area of Messianism was divided between tracts like *Meshare Qitrin*, and letters, some of which contain important references to the rumors about the Tribes.

This exile’s first stop seems to have been Portugal.²⁴ From there, at one point, he left and reached Italy, and then went on through the Balkans whence he arrived, after years, in Jerusalem, where he settled. There he studied in the Yeshiva which eventually was adopted by Rabbi Isaac Sholal, the former Nagid of Egypt. Although, according to Halevi’s testimony, he was occupied mainly with the study of Talmud, his importance for us lies in the fact that he happened to be at the center of a circle of scholars whose thoughts were very much centered on messianic issues. He tells us that, already in his youth in Spain, he was interested in messianic calculations, and saw the process of redemption as beginning with the fall of Constantinople and ending with four stages between 1520-1536.

One of his first letters was written in 1521 in the name of the members of the Yeshiva, and reminds us of the letter of 1455. It is written to a donor in Italy, and mentions the fact that they prayed for him “in front of the Temple,” and describes the life and condition of the Yeshiva. It stresses the importance of supporting the Yeshiva for the supporter’s own sake, for he will acquire “a hereditary portion in Jerusalem.” Last, but not least, it relates to the question of “whether any new sign concerning our redemption has occurred.” The second half of the letter addresses itself to this question, relating the somber mood of repentance in the Yeshiva, and the unceasing prayer vigils for “all our brethren in the diaspora . . .” It also mentions, in detail, the natural signs of stormy weather in the spring, and the damage that it caused to the idols on “the top of the palace” of the gentiles. Here we have the main motifs of the 1455 letter, but there is no reference to the Tribes, though they are already mentioned by Halevi in 1517 in his commentary on the apocalyptic treatise, *Prophecies of the Child*.

He does refer to them, however, in a letter dated 1525, where he defends his messianic calculations, of which two have passed seemingly without leaving any visible positive marks. In this long letter he suggests that,

23. Introduction to Rabbi Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi, *Meshare Qitrin* (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 9.

24. 1. Tishbi, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion from Spain and Portugal* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 38. n. 89.

in 1520, the previously defeated Falasha had risen and started fighting back against the Ethiopians. According to his source, an Ethiopian who came to Jerusalem, the Falasha were winning. As to the second stage of the redemption process, in 1524, Halevi says that his instincts tell him that some of the Tribes have made their move, starting to liberate the Jews wherever they arrive on their way.²⁵

Another letter is from 1528, and tells us that the Falasha gave PJ an ultimatum to prepare for war unless he would convert to Judaism. The sources of information are “three Ethiopians, each of them separately, and there were only minor differences between their accounts.” It would seem that Halevi interrogated everyone who came from Ethiopia to Jerusalem.

Additional letters show that those rumors occupied not only Halevi but the spiritual circle of the Yeshiva as a whole. We read in a 1525 letter that Jews in Egypt — possibly already under the influence of David Reuveni — have started to sell their property, “because they plan to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem.”²⁶ In the atmosphere of messianic excitement, the Tribes assumed, to an extent, the role of the Messiah. Contrary to other messianic movements, such as 17th century Sabbatianism — in which the rumors came *after* the appearance of a Messiah in order to supply an answer to the anticipated need for Jewish military forces associated with redemption — here, the Tribes themselves are the element in the forefront chronologically, while the Messiah himself will arrive eventually. This is a messianic movement that is not concerned with a personal Messiah. After all, the role of the Messiah is to lead and save the people, and that is what the Tribes were doing, according to the constantly incoming news.

How central was the expulsion from Spain for Halevi's circle? One must distinguish between the explicit and the implicit, as well as between conscious and subconscious influences. As mentioned above, already in his youth in Spain Halevi was interested in messianic calculation. He believed that the beginning of the great period of redemption was 1453. Other dates mentioned by him predate and postdate 1492, while the Expulsion itself does not figure conspicuously as a messianic event. In fact, it is mentioned as the climax of the troubles endured by the Jews in Spain since 1485.

But if we do not take a broader view of the issue at hand, we are bound to miss the point. The main question should not focus on the centrality of 1492 in the messianic calculation schemes, but, rather, on whether the Expulsion contributed to processes of messianic and apocalyptic thought, the general pre-occupation with Messianism, and the anticipation of the coming Redemption. When Halevi says, for example, that the prophet Obadia seems to reveal to us that “good things will be bestowed

25. I. Robinson, “Two Letters of Abraham ben Eliezer Halevi,” *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature II* [I. Twersky ed.] (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), pp. 407-8.

26. Neubauer, p. 33.

on Israel in the generation in which the Jews will leave Spain," it means that the Expulsion has messianic significance.

Yet, one can also detect a devaluation of that event. As years passed by, its memory and influence grew fainter. Halevi wrote fifteen to thirty years after the Expulsion. Since then, a series of events that took place had shaken him. We refer to the cruel decrees and pogroms against the Jews and Marranos in Portugal. We already mentioned Halevi's probable stay in Portugal. In his introduction of *Meshare Qitrin*, he bemoans the suffering of the Jews under the rule of Edom, and the details fit only the events in Portugal. It would seem that the cruel Portuguese experience filled Halevi's consciousness, pushing aside the previous tragedy of the 1492 Expulsion. It can be demonstrated that a similar psychological process took place with others of that generation.

The intense hatred which Halevi bears, in general, towards Edom is directed specifically, and in the main, against Portugal. As a matter of habit, he names it "the sinful kingdom," and says that, of all the nations, the Portuguese are the ones for whom the title of "butchers" is most befitting.

... for they were the butchers and the poor miserable Jews were the meat, and after that they became real butchers for the *Anuism* (forced converts to Catholicism) who remained amongst them, and they brought their heads under the sword and killed many of them.

A letter of another member of the same circle contains a story connecting the Tribes with the King of Portugal, who "was ashamed on account of his expulsion." It would seem from all of this that the troubles and forced-conversion in Portugal, as well as the Marranos and their lives there at that time, were foremost in the thoughts of the members of that circle. Yet, viewing the period as a whole, Halevi saw the decrees in Portugal as a continuation of the hardships endured by the Jews in Spain during and before the Expulsion.

Halevi represents a messianic enthusiast, yet not an impatient one, since we see that throughout he tried not to jump to conclusions without attempting to verify the rumors. This is supported by his cool attitude to the messianic pretender, David Reuveni. His accumulated messianic tension was channeled in the direction of messianic calculations, lending a careful ear to rumors about the Tribes and other world news such as the revolution by Martin Luther within Christianity.

Beyond Halevi, the picture as a whole must include the apocalyptic group in Jerusalem, under the material leadership and encouragement of Sholal, which served as a magnet for redemption-longing Jews. This is the group that created the tense expectation in the East, and also served as a channel for the Jews of Italy. One should remember that, although the beginning of this expectation belong to the people of Jerusalem of the mid-15th century, this group definitely marked the intensification of the messianic preoccupation and propaganda.

Conclusions

The historical conclusions of our discussion are divided into two. On the level of the period under discussion, the question is whether it is possible to divide the history of Messianism into pre- and post-Expulsion periods, as far as the topic of the rumors of the Ten Tribes is concerned. For a full answer, one must examine the causes of the preoccupation with the Tribes and its intensity. The interest in the Tribes had gained popularity since the end of the 14th century, owing to the commercial contacts with the East. The knowledge about Jews in Ethiopia, and their wars against the Christians there, caused Jews in Jerusalem and Europe, mainly in Italy, to be swept by messianic fervor. The routes of the rumors were Ethiopia to Jerusalem, the destination of Ethiopian monks, and Ethiopia to Alexandria, the mercantile center for Venetian and other merchants who went to the East.

The information from Jerusalem, which was disseminated in the form of letters, carried special significance since, symbolically, Jerusalem was not only the spiritual center of the Jewish people, but also the symbol of its independence that was to be realized once again in the messianic era. The scholars of Jerusalem, who were in perpetual need of financial support, made sure that the rumors would circulate regularly. From this they only benefitted. Their main target was the Jewish communities in Italy, who showed interest in the Tribes during the 15th century. Their interest was aroused, for they were exposed to similar rumors from Christians about PJ, some of which also referred to the Tribes.

The impetus for the Christian quest for PJ was the Ottoman threat and the hope that the wonderous and powerful king would aid and save Europe. In the second half of the 15th century, Europe was fed stories that came from Portugal, whose sailors sailed the seas around Africa in quest of PJ. For the Jews, the fall of Constantinople was a divinely ordained event that was to mark the beginning of the fall of Christendom and of the coming redemption. That global military confrontation, naturally designed for the salvation of Israel, stimulated the popular imagination that looked toward the eventual intervention of the Tribes.

In this respect there is no dramatic change after the Expulsion. It is true that the Tribes had a prominent place in Abravanel's messianic scheme, but this leader wrote mainly for the exiles who were in distress. His material, designed to uplift their failing morale, was drawn from rabbinic and popular traditions, and Abravanel returned it to the people in a neatly "codified" manner. Other scholars, notably rabbinic authorities such as Rabbi Jacob ibn Habib and Rabbi David ibn Zimra — who is the first *poseq* (rabbinic decisor) to refer to the Falasha — and even Rabbi Joseph Taitazaq — who supported the messianic pretender Shlomo Molkho in the 1520s — remained silent. One tends to see this as a reflection of their caution, emanating from their sense of responsibility as leaders.

Their judgment of the need to promote messianic hopes was apparently at odds with Abravanel's.

There is, however, an intensification of the rumors from Jerusalem in the beginning of the 16th century. The parties responsible for it are Abraham Halevi and the members of the Yeshiva there. But although the Expulsion did leave its mark on Halevi, we know that his preoccupation with Messianism did not start in 1492, and that, as a traumatic experience, the forced-conversion in Portugal was by far more significant.

The conclusion, from all the sources reviewed above, is that no one event, be it the fall of Constantinople or the tragic ordeals in the Iberian Peninsula, can serve as the sole explanation for the phenomenon of the popularity of the rumors.

Scholem, in his famous thesis concerning the long-range connection between the Expulsion and the kabbalah of the Ari in Safed, writes:

Only gradually, as the Expulsion ceased to be regarded in a redemptive light and loomed up all the more distinctly in its catastrophic character, did the flames which had flared up from the apocalyptic abyss sweep over wide areas of the Jewish world until they finally seized upon and recast the mystical theology of Kabbalism.²⁷

If the connection between the Expulsion and the kabbalah in Safed is true, one must see the messianic awakening as starting much earlier, and moving towards a climax intertwined with the Tribes and the Reuveni-Molkho messianic episode. One can understand neither what transpired there in general, nor many of the details, without the Jewish and Christian background surveyed above. When the disappointment of the aftermath set in, only then did minds open to another alternative. Popular Messianism, whose coals continued to burn slowly and flared up from time to time, allowed for a new and different messianic thinking.

In the 1670's, Rabbi Isaac ibn Aqrish published a collection of Tribes-related stories, and in the introduction he writes:

And all these beliefs are difficult in my mind, and in the minds of many others greater than I, for many reasons . . . especially since we see Rabbi Akiva's dictum . . . And though I have seen the PJ letter and the Travels of Rabbi Benjamin (of Tudela) and the book of Eldad the Danite, and Reuveni who came to Constantinople and went to Portugal in 1522 . . . we might say that they are but inventions in order to strengthen buckling knees and to encourage the hearts of the distressed.²⁸

One might seriously doubt whether ibn Aqrish would have written such things, or even if he would have had such thoughts, before the 1530's.²⁹

On another level, that of the history of Messianism, one should raise

27. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 247.

28. A. Ya'ari, "The Adventures and Books of Rabbi Isaac Aqrish," in *Mehqerei Sefer* (Jerusalem, 1958), p. 238.

29. Cf. A.Z. Aescoly, "The Jews of Abyssinia in Hebrew Literature" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 1 (1937): 419.

one more question. Messianic movements were only one of the reactions, extreme in their activism, to the problem of Exile. In the spectrum of reactions we might include, on the passive end, theological explanations of the Exile. Between these extremes, we should mention Aliyah to the Land of Israel à la Rabbi Judah Halevi, attempts by kabbalists to hasten the redemption by theurgic means, eschatological calculations, etc. Where, in this spectrum, are we to place the preoccupation with the rumors?

The title of this article talks about "Rumor" and "Quest." Both of these terms are correct as far as the Christians and PJ are concerned. As for the Jews and the Tribes, the term "quest" is not relevant. To the best of our knowledge, during our period Jews did not embark on trips to search for the Tribes. This warrants an explanation, since Christians, both states and individuals, did attempt to establish contacts with PJ.

We saw that, in the last decade of the 15th century, the King of Portugal sent two Jews to look for his two earlier messengers to PJ. This was not a Jewish initiative. For C.F. Beckingham, the distinguished scholar of PJ, Ethiopia, and the travels there, it is clear that the king chose Jews because of their relative advantage over Christians in such a trip. Why, then, didn't the Jews initiate searches for the Tribes? If, from Ethiopia they saw a thin ray of light in the darkness of Exile, why did they not attempt to turn it into daylight? Were they afraid of what they might find out? Were the rumors that "arrived every day" enough for them? Or, should we surmise from this that it was the passivity of Exile, the mental millstone hanging around the people's neck, that brought about a preference for suffering as a way of life, while the rumors were something to enjoy in one's spare time? The messianic energy, even in this hour of self-pity, was enough for a messianic "awakening," but it was wasted on pre-occupations with messianic calculations and the quest for rumors about the Tribes. There was no active attempt to find them, let alone to achieve a real contact with that supposed Jewish military power. The interest in the Tribes, including the propaganda that emanated from Jerusalem, was but a vent for the tension, and a release of messianic energy in literary form. Those who, due to a practical or mental limitations, could not act, occupied themselves with rumors and writing.³⁰

30. Netanyahu, in the conclusion of his biography of Abravanel, seems to suggest that the influence of Abravanel's messianic idea, of leaving it all up to God, was the reason for the failure of Joseph Nasi's call (sixty years after Abravanel's death) to settle in the Land of Israel: "In brief, it was the influence of Don Isaac Abravanel that destroyed the influence of Don Joseph Nasi." (p. 256) I think that we ought not to blame Abravanel for something that became such a major mental characteristic of the "*Galut* Jew," long before he wrote his influential messianic treatises. Indeed, Abravanel only represents that Judaism of which he was a product.

Jewish-Christian Polemics in Light of the Expulsion from Spain

DANIEL J. LASKER

THE CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION TO JUDAISM and the Jewish response to the Christian mission were not substantially affected by the expulsion from Spain. The fact that a major Jewish community disappeared almost overnight, as a result of the expulsion and the mass conversions, did not change the basic Christian and Jewish arguments concerning the truth of their respective religions. For their part, Christians had argued for centuries that the (Christian initiated) oppression of the Jews was a sign of divine displeasure, and the expulsion was just one more example of such mistreatment of the Jews. It was not the first expulsion of Jews, nor would it be the last. Furthermore, while Christians saw the persecution of the Jews as one more indication of the truth of Christianity, it was by no means the most convincing or significant argument for their religion. Similarly, in Jewish polemics after the expulsion, there was no dramatic impact of the expulsion on the anti-Christian arguments. For many Jewish writers, the expulsion was just one further example of divine punishment for the Jewish people in exile, and even before 1492 Jewish theologians had offered explanations for this particular destiny.¹ For these thinkers, the expulsion did not affect the ultimate truth of Judaism or the falsehood of Christianity.

Pre-Expulsion Polemics

In order to understand why the expulsion had so little impact on the polemical arguments themselves, it is necessary to review the nature of the Jewish-Christian debate as it had developed from the first Christian century to the fifteenth. Some of the basic themes of this debate were already in place from the earliest centuries of Christianity, with some of the following differences between the religions as touchstones of it. Jews and Christians disagreed about the nature of messiah. Christians stated that he is a God-man who died to redeem humanity from original sin, whereas Jews believed that the messiah would be a human being who would gather Jews from exile and restore the Davidic kingdom. Christians asserted that they were the true Israel, descendants of Abraham according to the faith, who had inherited the Bible. Jews answered that those who would claim proprietorship over the Hebrew Bible must follow its dictates in terms of literal religious observance, and not claim, as Christians do, that the laws

1. Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* (1140) is a good example of Jewish apologetics in light of the exile and the low social and material status of Jews in non-Jewish societies.

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of the Torah had been abrogated. Jewish thinkers maintained that God's unity is simple and absolute, and His incorporeality would preclude incarnation, whereas Christians believed in a triune God of three Persons, one of whom, the Son, took on human flesh.²

To promote their respective religions, both Jewish and Christian polemicists employed three types of contentions — exegetical, rational, and historical.³

Exegetical arguments are concerned with the interpretation of sacred texts, which, in the Jewish-Christian debate, means the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Talmud. The first exegetical arguments revolved around the Hebrew Bible, with Christians insisting that this work foretold the birth, ministry and death of Jesus. In the New Testament itself, and in later anti-Jewish polemical compositions, Christian authors used Biblical verses as prooftexts of the truth of Christianity. Jewish writers countered with their own interpretations of Scriptural texts, intending thereby to prove that Christian exegesis was faulty. Some Jewish polemicists also looked to the New Testament as a source for their anti-Christian contentions, arguing that Christianity, as it developed, was a distortion of Jesus' teachings and of early Christian doctrines. They pointed out as well that parts of the New Testament contradict either the Hebrew Bible or other parts of the New Testament.

In the thirteenth century, Christian missionaries initiated the extensive use of rabbinic literature as a source of exegetical contentions. They argued in one of two ways, either that certain Talmudic and midrashic passages prove the central tenet of Christianity, namely that the messiah had already come, or that the Talmud and midrash are full of blasphemy and should be destroyed. The Christian application of post-Biblical Jewish literature for polemical purposes was a new tactic in the age-old Jewish-Christian debate; the ultimate issue, namely, which religion is the true one, remained the same.⁴

Rational arguments can be divided into two types, those which can be designated as "common sense," and those which fall under the category of "philosophy." Common sense contentions are based on value judgments, whereas philosophical arguments are based on universally accepted rational principles. For instance, rational arguments against the Christian doctrine of incarnation took two forms, either that God could not be-

2. Literature on the Jewish-Christian debate is extensive; see, e.g., my *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1977); David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1979); Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial* (Rutherford et al., 1982); Frank Talmage, *Disputation and Dialogue* (New York, 1975); and A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* (Cambridge, 1935).

3. For a more detailed discussion of the various types of argumentation, see my *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 1-12.

4. For discussions of the new Christian tactics in the thirteenth century, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca, 1982), and Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith* (Berkeley, 1989).

come incarnate because it is not befitting for God to suffer the indignities of human existence (common sense argument), or that God could not become incarnate because He is incorporeal and immutable (philosophical argument). Jewish polemicists employed a wide range of philosophical arguments in order to show what they considered to be the absurdity of such Christian doctrines as trinity, incarnation, virgin birth, transubstantiation, and original sin. These philosophical contentions were modified according to the prevailing philosophical trends of the time; Jewish polemicists in Islamic countries used proofs derived from the *Kalam* (body of Islamic sacred religious thought), while Spanish Jewish philosophical polemicists generally relied upon Aristotelian principles.⁵

Historical arguments are derived neither from the divine texts nor from the intellect; rather, they are based on the real world, a reality considered ordained by God. Christians understood Jewish suffering and Christian temporal success as indicators of the truth of Christianity and the falseness of Judaism. The dispersion of the Jews and their suffering as a minority were understood as a punishment for the execution of Jesus. Jewish authors agreed that the Jewish condition was deplorable, and they understood it as a result of Jewish sins, but not the sin of rejecting Jesus. Some polemicists even argued that it was Jewish apostasy which delayed the messianic ingathering of the exiles. Furthermore, Christian weakness vis-à-vis the Islamic world was seen by Jews as undermining the Christian historical argument for the truth of their religion. For their part, Jewish polemicists compared what they considered to be the immorality of Christian society with the high ethical standards of Jewish life, contending thereby that Judaism is the true religion.

In the last hundred years of Jewish life in Christian Spain (1391-1492), the Jewish-Christian debate intensified, and significant polemical works were written. On the Jewish side, this was the heyday of the philosophical polemic, notably Profiat Duran's epistle, *Be Not Like Your Fathers* and Hasdai Crescas' *Refutation of the Christian Principles*.⁶ On the Christian side, the Disputation of Tortosa (1413-1414) was orchestrated as a major demoralizing event in Jewish life, since Spain's leading rabbis were forced into interminable public debate in Tortosa while their abandoned congregants were subjected to unceasing Christian missionary efforts. The Disputation was called at the instigation of a Jewish convert to Christianity, Geronimo de Santa Fe (originally Joshua Lorki), who at-

5. A fuller discussion of Jewish philosophical polemics can be found in my *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*.

6. Duran's work is available in Hebrew in Frank Talmage's *The Polemical Writings of Profiat Duran* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 73-83; a partial English translation can be found in Franz Kobler, *Letters of Jews Through the Ages* (London, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 276-282. A Hebrew translation of Crescas' polemic (it was originally written in a Spanish vernacular) was edited by me in *Hasdai Crescas' Bittul Iggavei Ha-Nozrim* (Ramat Gan and Beer Sheva, 1990), and my English translation will soon be available in *Hasdai Crescas' Refutation of the Christian Principles* (Albany, 1992).

tempted to prove the truth of Christianity from rabbinic sources. Historical arguments, while present in the last pre-expulsion century, were not central to either side.

If the expulsion were to have had an influence on the actual contents of the Jewish-Christian debate, we would have expected that the influence must be expressed in the historical arguments used by both sides. Christians could have pointed to the expulsion as conclusive proof of the rejection of the Jewish People, while Jews would have had to explain their faith in Judaism despite the great tragedy of the expulsion. These arguments, however, are not very common. Even when authors do make reference to the expulsion, their contentions do not, in any sense, represent a radical departure from previous polemical stances. Just as developments in philosophy brought about new philosophical arguments, changing historical events allowed for new historical ones. These new historical arguments did not change the nature of the debate or the basic position of the debaters.

All this is not to say that the expulsion had no influence whatsoever on the course of Jewish-Christian polemics. Controversial tracts were written in the wake of the expulsion, and these works definitely show the impact of the event on Jewish and Christian thinking.

Don Isaac Abravanel

Don Isaac Abravanel (1437-1508) was a statesman, financier, philosopher, and exegete, and the most outstanding Jewish figure to be exiled from Spain, where he had served in the court of Ferdinand and Isabella. His prodigious literary output began on the Iberian peninsula and continued unabated in Italy, his place of refuge. While he was at home in the world of philosophy, he adopted a conservative attitude towards the use of reason in religious matters.⁷

In 1496, four years after the expulsion, Abravanel began work on what might be called a "messianic trilogy,"⁸ three works devoted to messianic speculation and denial of the Christian claim that the messiah had already come. These works are *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah* (*The Wells of Salvation*, a commentary on Daniel), *Mashmi'a Yeshu'ah* (*The Announcer of Salvation*), and *Yeshu'ot Meshiho* (*The Salvation of His Messiah*). They were all intended to reassure the Jewish people that the true messiah would still come, and that Christian exegesis of Biblical and rabbinic texts was faulty. There can be little doubt that these books were a direct result of the expulsion and the resultant Jewish despair, and they contain much anti-

7. For Abravanel's life and thought, see Ben Zion Nctanyahu, *Don Isaac Abravanel* (Philadelphia, 1972).

8. The term was first used by Simon Bernstein in *Shomrei Ha-Homot* (Tel Aviv, 1938), p. 16.

Christian material. Nevertheless, there are no new anti-Christian arguments in them occasioned by the expulsion.

The focus of attention here will be *Yeshu'ot Meshiho*, a composition intended to answer Christian claims that rabbinic literature proves three major doctrines of Christianity, namely, that the messiah has been born and has already come; that the messiah is divine; and that the laws of the Torah are abrogated in the messianic era.⁹ This composition was a direct refutation of the arguments presented by the apostate Geronimo de Santa Fe at the Disputation of Tortosa, and Abravanel's pain at the existence of so many Iberian Jewish apostates is evident in his work.¹⁰ Nevertheless, many of the rabbinic passages cited by Geronimo had previously been employed by earlier Christian anti-Jewish polemicists and had been explained by Abravanel's predecessors (although not to his satisfaction).

Abravanel began *Yeshu'ot Meshiho* with an explanation of the need for such a work. The Jewish people is depressed and dispirited as a result of the exile and the expulsion. They say: "Why has the Son of Jesse not come out of prison to reign; why are the footsteps of his chariot delayed . . . Our bones are dry; our hope is lost . . . The messiah of the God of Jacob is dead or broken or imprisoned; his sun will not shine." Abravanel states that his book, *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah*, had been the first step on the road to recovery from the plague of self-doubt and depression. Now, *Yeshu'ot Meshiho* was necessary to continue the healing process.¹¹ We see, therefore, that the expulsion was a major consideration in the composition of this work, even though the weight of the exile and the delay in the messiah's coming were certainly common themes in pre-expulsion literature.

When we turn to an examination of the actual arguments used by Abravanel, it is obvious that the fact of expulsion is of no consequence to the nature of the contentions. He repeats the controversial *midrashim*, argues that the Christians had distorted their meanings (and in some cases the distortion extended to the actual text of the rabbinic statements), and explicates the passages so as to deny any possible Christological interpretation. Abravanel's explanations are often forced, displaying a great deal of imagination, but they are firmly in the tradition of previous Jewish attempts to refute Christian exegesis of the midrash.

The expulsion is mentioned once in the body of the work, but it is in the context of a discussion of previous expulsions. In order to explain a particularly difficult midrash, Abravanel distinguishes between various

9. *Yeshu'ot Meshiho* was published in Koenigsberg, 1861, and reissued in photo offset in Israel (n.p., n.d.). For a thorough study of this work and Abravanel's attitude towards rabbinic literature, see Eric Lawee, "Inheritance of the Fathers": R. Isaac Abravanel and Tradition," Harvard University Dissertation, forthcoming.

10. See *Yeshu'ot Meshiho*, p. 16a: "No one should think that the sinners of Israel, including the heretics and the apostates, will not be punished in the world to come." See also p. 34a.

11. See *Yeshu'ot Meshiho*, p. 4a; Abravanel used the imagery of a house afflicted with leprosy (cf. Lev. 14:33-53) as comparable to the situation of the Jews of his time.

stages in Jewish history. Thus, from the destruction of the Temple and the ensuing dispersion of the Jewish people until the year 1260, there had been persecutions and forced conversions, but no expulsions. After 1260, there were quite a number of expulsions, culminating in the one from Spain. The next stage in Jewish history, he claimed, would be the messianic redemption.¹²

For Abravanel, then, the expulsion was neither unique nor unexpected; it had no bearing on the truth of Judaism. If anything, it brought the Jewish people one step closer to the coming of the messiah. Yet, it had an impact on Jewish morale and, as a result, it was necessary to compose anti-Christian works which would restore Jewish faith and self-respect.

Solomon ibn Verga

Almost nothing is known about Solomon ibn Verga, the author of *Shevet Yehudah* (*The Staff of Judah*). He mentions in his book that he was in Portugal during the Lisbon Massacre of 1506; if so, he must have been living as a *converso*, because the Jews of Portugal were all forcibly converted in 1497. Eventually, he escaped from Portugal. *Shevet Yehudah* is a chronicle of disasters and persecutions which have befallen the Jewish people, and, as such, the expulsion from Spain plays a major role in the narrative. A description of the expulsion is included, as are various stories about the fate of the expellees and attempts at explaining the reasons behind the event. It is a sad tale which Ibn Verga tells and, undoubtedly, the expulsion from Spain was the catalyst behind its composition.¹³

Even in this case, the fact that the expulsion from Spain is presented as one in a series of national tragedies serves to diminish its specific impact. Like Abravanel before him, ibn Verga regarded all persecution of the Jews to be connected; no particular event differed qualitatively from the other disasters. The expulsion was quantitatively a much more serious event than some of the previous persecutions, and it receives proportionally more discussion. It was, however, not a unique event wielding influence on the Jewish-Christian debate.

Ibn Verga was well attuned to the issues which divided Judaism and Christianity. As part of his chronicle, he includes accounts of disputations, some based on historical events, e.g., his version of the Disputation of Tortosa, and some apparently the fruit of his imagination. Here we find the typical Christian arguments against Judaism and the typical Jewish responses. A good example is a fictional section of *Shevet Yehudah* entitled "A Disputation Between a Christian Man and a Jewish Man before King Don Alfonso of Portugal." The Christian begins with an exegetical argu-

12. *Yeshu'ot Meshiho*, pp. 46a-b; Abravanel expected the messiah to come in the year 1503.

13. The Hebrew text was published a number of times, most notably in the edition of Azriel Shochat and Yitzhaq Baer, Jerusalem, 1947. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shevet Yehuda* (Cincinnati, 1976).

ment derived from Ps. 22 ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"). The Christian interprets this Psalm as referring to Jesus on the cross; the Jew answers that anyone can play around with Biblical verses and, as proof, he interprets verses from Lam. 3 as referring to a bothersome rooster. In addition, ibn Verga asserts that there are a number of verses in Ps. 22 which could not have referred to Jesus.

The disputation then turns to philosophical matters. Borrowing from the account of a pre-expulsion disputation recorded by Abraham Bibago, ibn Verga quotes the Christian as asking why the Jew did not believe in incarnation, an admittedly irrational doctrine, if he accepted another irrational doctrine, the creation of the world out of nothing. The Jew replies that no one has proved that creation is impossible, while it is obvious that incarnation is an impossibility. Using a common argument against the Christian view of incarnation and salvation, ibn Verga states:

If God became incarnate in order to receive an infinite punishment for the sin of Adam who sinned against the Infinite, who received this punishment? If we say the divine part, this is impossible, for He cannot die. If it was the flesh part, it is well known that flesh is limited. How can we say, then, that he received an infinite punishment?

The disputation continues with the king's objection to certain rabbinic *midrashim*. The Jew responds by saying that rabbinic statements were intended to teach lessons by means of parables and rhetoric, and that they contain truths which might not be readily apparent. He then proceeds to explain the midrash to which the king had taken exception. The king sums up (in a rather atypical fashion):

I see that your words are good, but they are not necessarily true. Therefore, we Christians will rely upon our true tradition, and you will rely upon that which you think is true. You will receive reward because your intentions are towards God, and if you had demonstrative knowledge that your faith is wrong, you would become part of us.¹⁴

Thus, even after the expulsion, it was possible to use the same exegetical and philosophical arguments which had characterized the Jewish-Christian polemic of pre-expulsion Spain.

Francisco Machado

The Portuguese monk, Francisco Machado, composed an anti-Jewish treatise in 1541, a time when there were no more Jews in Portugal. There were, however, *conversos* who were still loyal to Jewish traditions. Machado called his work *Espelho de Christãos Novos* (*The Mirror of the New Christians*), intending thereby to polemicize against the forced converts who did not fully accept their new religion. The author argues that there are twenty characteristics of the messiah, and all of them had been ful-

14. This disputation is found in *Shevet Yehudah*, pp. 87-90; cf. the notes, pp. 193-5; see also my *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, pp. 133, 187, n. 66. The positive image assigned by ibn Verga to the figure of the king is discussed by Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre*.

filled in Jesus. While employing typical scriptural proofs as well as the works of the Church Fathers, Machado also includes many rabbinic statements, showing some familiarity with the Jewish tradition.¹⁵

The fact that this polemic was written specifically against New Christians is an indication of the historical situation in Portugal brought about by the expulsion from Spain and the forced conversions in Portugal. Christians had long suspected the *conversos* of lack of loyalty to Christianity, and this situation was exacerbated by the large numbers of Jews who accepted baptism with less than whole-hearted enthusiasm. In this respect, therefore, *Espelho* can be seen to have been influenced by the expulsion. Machado's arguments, however, are not innovative, and certainly show no influence of the expulsion.

Even when Machado could have used the expulsion as part of an historical argument, he refrained from doing so. In Chapter 18 of *Espelho*, he explains how "the captivity of the Jews was occasioned by the death of the messiah." In this section, the destruction of the Temple by Titus and the subsequent dispersion of the Jews is used as proof that Jesus was the messiah. "Not only shall [the Jewish ancestors] suffer exile but also all those who come after and all future generations shall suffer as well." The destruction of the first Temple, caused by idolatry, was punished by a seventy year exile; the destruction of the second Temple, caused by the murder of Jesus, has now lasted almost 1500 years. Both Josephus and rabbinic sources are adduced to describe the destruction of the Temple many centuries previously, but no mention is made here of the expulsion from Spain.¹⁶ Chapter 22 describes the hope of the Jews to be gathered from exile by the messiah. For Machado, once the Temple was destroyed, that hope is futile. As above, the destruction of the Temple, and not the expulsion, is seen as central to Jewish history.¹⁷

Conclusion

The expulsion from Spain was a traumatic experience for world Jewry with religious, social and economic consequences. Both Jewish and Christian polemicists were well aware of this watershed event in Jewish history, and a number of polemical works were written in its wake. Nevertheless, the expulsion itself seems to have had little effect on the arguments used by the polemicists. The contentions used by the two sides remained unchanged; they had been in operation for centuries and have continued to be in use until this very day. New historical events might be able to lend a certain poignancy to the traditional arguments, but, ultimately, the issues which divide Judaism and Christianity transcend history.

15. See Mildred E. Vieira and Frank Talmage. *The Mirror of the New Christians* (*Espelho de Christãos Novos*) (Toronto, 1977); one aspect of Machado's polemic has been discussed in my "Transubstantiation, Elijah's Chair, Plato, and the Jewish-Christian Debate," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 143:1-2 (January-June, 1984): 31-58.

16. See *Espelho*, pp. 266-283.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-319.

Women in (Post-1492) Spanish Crypto-Jewish Society

RENÉE LEVINE MELAMMED

THE ROLE OF THE WOMAN IN CRYPTO-Jewish society has been recognized as differing significantly from that of the woman in traditional Jewish society. Scholars have agreed that crypto-Jewish women played an unusual role in the perpetuation and preservation of observances associated with Judaism.¹ This acknowledgment, however, cannot be legitimized without a close examination of crypto-Jewish society² and an analysis of the subsequent lifestyles that were chosen by numerous *conversas*.³

In order to understand these lifestyles as well as these women, a more general background must first be provided. The term *converso* means convert; technically, the *converso* should have personally experienced the conversion which was, in this case, from Judaism to Christianity, but, in Spanish society, the term gained broader significance. Following the wave of forced conversions in Spain in 1492, the number of converts was so great that the neophyte could not easily blend into the host culture as could, and had happened with, individual converts in the past. As a result, the term *converso*, which should have been a temporary nomenclature for any given convert, was applied to the immediate descendents of the *converso* and to their progeny as well. The new religion of these converts, regardless of whether they had embraced Catholicism under coercion, was binding; rightfully, they should have become fully privileged members of Spanish Christian society. However, because the system of checks and balances that had defined clear limitations for the Jew was no longer applicable, the *converso* presence was viewed as a serious threat to the Catholic Spaniard. The former Jew now had complete access to all avenues of life, a fact that was interpreted as threatening, for instead of having identifiable Jews in their midst, these technical Christians who were still unnervingly similar to Jews, had begun to assimilate.

Consequently, the host society created a separation between itself

1. See, for example, I.S. Révah, "La religion d'Uriel da Costa, Marrane de Porto," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 161 (1962), p. 59, or Brian S. Pullan, "The Inquisition and the Jews of Venice: The Case of Gaspare Ribeiro 1580-1591," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 62 (1979), p. 230.

2. One well-studied society is that of Ciudad Real. See Haim Beinart, *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1974-1985).

3. A study of 111 *conversas* and their Jewish lifestyle appears in my dissertation. See Renée C. Levine, *Women in Spanish Crypto-Judaism, 1492-1520* (Brandeis University, 1983).

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and these converted Jews by refusing to acknowledge them as equals. This intense hatred of the *converso* expressed itself essentially as ethnic anti-Semitism. By the mid-fifteenth century, Old Christians were careful to distinguish themselves from New Christians or *conversos*; the latter were relegated to the confines of their own society, whether they were interested in remaining a coherent body or not. The precedent set by the municipality of Toledo in 1449, namely, the demand for *limpieza de sangre*⁴ by means of purity of blood laws, eventually became the norm for exclusion of the New Christians from various significant walks of life.

While the Old Christian tended to view this New Christian as unfaithful to the tenets of the Catholic Church and, thus, an insincere convert, this was not necessarily so. The majority of those Jews who had converted in 1391 obviously did so in order to save their lives and not because they had "seen the light." However, there were more than a few who were either convinced that Christianity was on the ascent or that conversion was worthwhile since it could open any of a number of previously closed doors to the Jew such as to the university, the clergy, military orders, and the like. Some of these were voluntary converts who joined the ranks of the *conversos* during the course of the fifteenth century. Clearly, this collection of former Jews was by no means monolithic; yet, for the Old Christian, it was simpler to classify them all as threats to Catholic society.

Needless to say, there were *conversos* who secretly observed Judaism despite the fact that they or their ancestors had been baptized. Those who remained faithful to their ancestral religion are referred to as judaizers or *judaizantes*; essentially, they were crypto-Jews, secretly observing Jewish practices, for now that they were baptized, an overt return to Judaism was unthinkable and unacceptable; in the eyes of the Church, any act of observance of the Law of Moses on the part of a baptized Catholic was tantamount to heresy, and would be dealt with severely if he or she remained obstinate in his or her error.

The threat imposed by these "heretics" was presented as the precipitating factor leading to the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478.⁵ Prior to its establishment, although observance of Judaism was not something for the *converso* to flaunt, there was no risk of life or property involved for the judaizer. He or she had already been denied acceptance into the larger Christian society regardless of whether any ties to the ancestral religion had survived. And, ironically, by this time, the majority of the *conversos* in Spain were simply descendants of the original forced converts of 1391, who had been born into Catholicism; thus, they had had

4. The classic work on the topic is by Albert Sicoff, *Les Controverses des status de "pureté de sang" en Espagne du X^e-siècle* (Paris, 1960).

5. The classic work on the Inquisition is that of Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (London, 1907). Newer publications with modern assessments abound; some of the finer ones are Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York: The Free Press, 1988) and William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

no personal life experience as a Jew. Yet, they were still categorized as *conversos*. Many of those who might have successfully assimilated were prevented from doing so by the intolerance, hatred and rejection that they experienced solely because their blood was not pure by Old Christian standards. Needless to say, with the appearance of the Holy Tribunal, the situation was radically altered. Not only did the observance of Jewish law or ritual become an act of heresy on the part of the baptized Jew or his descendent; now, his or her very life, and, possibly, those of loved ones, were at stake as well.

A mere fourteen years after the establishment of this institution, the (unconverted) Jews of Spain were expelled. One of the reasons cited for this action was the very fact that they had served as mentors, teachers, and suppliers of Jewish goods for the crypto-Jews. With the expulsion, the situation was radically altered: now there were no rabbis or teachers, no ritual slaughterers to provide kosher meat, no circumciser, virtually no religious functionaries. Not only was all spiritual and personal support cut off, but all sources of Jewish knowledge and guidance, including the synagogues and the literature, so essential to the perpetuation of Jewish life, disappeared along with the Jewish community.

Consequently, after 1492, crypto-Judaism both suffered and changed. Ironically enough, the numbers of the *conversos* increased because of those Jews who could not bear to leave their homeland and, in 1492, became the last group of Spanish converts from Judaism. Nevertheless, those who opted to judaize now had to make a greater effort to retain their Jewish memory; oral transmission, naturally, became the sole means for preservation of law, custom and ritual. Due to the very nature of memory, much was, and would be, forgotten; and certain observances, such as circumcision, became virtually impossible as they were tantamount to confession to the authorities. Embellishments and deviations also appeared as naturally as the lacunae. No standardized religion would or could develop in crypto-Jewish society. Therefore, we cannot judge the lifestyles of *judaizantes* by making a simple comparison to normative Judaism. The emphasis here must be upon the fact that, in the eyes of the Inquisition, the intention behind the deed was all-important; if the "perpetrator" intended to observe the Law of Moses, the act was heretical even if there was no *halakhic* basis to be found for a given observance.

How, indeed, was a potential heretic treated within the confines of the Inquisitorial court? Needless to say, there were minimal requirements necessary in order to qualify as a suspected judaizer. The defendant had to be a New Christian who had converted during his or her lifetime or had been born to a parent who was a New Christian. In addition, information from at least two sources must have been available to implicate this New Christian in judaizing activities. The actual trial was conducted in secret, although every word said and each and every step taken was meticulously recorded by notaries. These were secret documents intended for

the use for the inquisitors; the fact that information sought concerning Judaizers was supplied by an adversary does not necessarily invalidate the accuracy of the findings. At the same time, the Inquisition was an institution under human control, and the trials and the way in which the judges in their role as functionaries directed those trials reflect the psychology of the men involved; thus, the tribunal itself could differ in spirit depending upon the time and the place of the trial.⁶ One must realize that, for the majority of the New Christians on trial for judaizing, these Inquisition transcripts represent the only source extant with any information whatsoever concerning them and crypto-Jewish life.⁷

Precisely what can a glimpse into the proceedings of an Inquisition trial offer? To begin with, each individual dossier offers information about judaizing, which is contained in the accusations, or charges of judaizing made by the prosecuting attorney; confessions, if they happened to have been made; and witness testimonies as gathered by the prosecution. The accusations actually have the charges listed in the order of importance as perceived by the prosecutor; thus, observing the Sabbath would precede neglecting to attend to one's Christian obligations, for the latter would not suffice as proof of heresy. Charges span almost every aspect of Jewish life, including observance of the Sabbath, holidays and fast days, the dietary laws, death⁸ and birth rites,⁹ and more.

A close look at the contents of these various activities leaves no doubt in one's mind that there is a need to re-assess the roles of men and women as traditionally perceived in Judaism. As explained above, the world of the post-1492 Judaizers differed considerably from that of normative Judaism. Thus, the same criteria cannot be used in order to determine the level of observance of, or devotion to, Judaism. Ironically, the same *converso* who might have been rejected by the rabbis for any of numerous halakhic reasons, could easily have been viewed by the inquisitors as a believing judaizer who was to be punished accordingly. Thus, in light of the constant fear of being discovered and reported to the Holy Tribunal, and considering the lack of knowledge that had previously been provided by the Spanish Jewish community until 1492, the crypto-Jew often observed a "Judaism" that differed from that of his co-religionists abroad.

6. I.S. Révah expands upon this idea in his essay, "Les marranes, *Revue des Études Juives* 118 (1959-60), p. 46.

7. For a reconstruction of a community, see, for example, Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial by the Inquisition* (Jerusalem, 1981).

8. The particular cases which will be used here as examples do not happen to include death or mourning rituals; this by no means indicates that these rituals had disappeared from the judaizing consciousness. See, for example, Renée Levine Melammed, "Some Death and Mourning Customs of Castilian *Conversas*," *Exile and Diaspora* (Jerusalem, 1991).

9. Purity rites will appear in the cases to be analyzed, but no birth rites were retained in these particular families. For information on these rituals which were, indeed, observed by other judaizing women, see my article, "Noticias Sobre Los Ritos de Los Nacimientos y de la Pureza de las Judeo-Conversas Castellanas del Siglo XVI," *El Olivo* 13:29-30 (1989).

In this light, we must examine the world of the judaizing *conversas* or the crypto-Jewish women. While the role of the Jewish woman has traditionally been home-oriented, crypto-Judaism itself found the home to be its only refuge. Not only were there no Jewish institutions left after 1492, but once the first tribunal was set up in Seville in 1481, open judaizing was simply foolhardy. One never knew who might voluntarily offer information to the inquisitors during a declared Grace Period, nor could one ever know who might have provided evidence that would precipitate one's downfall.

On the other hand, while the home seemed to be the most logical as well as the safest site for clandestine observance, this calculation often backfired. A cursory reading of almost any Inquisition trial reveals the fact that a large percentage of the witnesses for the prosecution were former employees in the defendant's home, usually domestic servants. These servants were generally members of the lower class, who often came into confrontation with their employers. Consequently, a good many of them were dismissed from their positions, often after scathing accusations and bitter quarrels. Needless to say, the disgruntled former servant would rarely have qualms about informing on his former New Christian masters and mistresses. These individuals and potential informers were present inside the home, the one haven chosen by the judaizer to attempt privately, and presumably safely, to observe his or her ancestral religion.¹⁰

At the same time, testimonies were provided by neighbors, business associates, "friends," relatives, and by the defendants themselves as confessions, many of which were made without any semblance of torture to avoid torture and burning at the stake, sometimes during the Grace Period before inquisitorial proceedings began, in fear of denouncement by others, or after being confronted with the charges and supporting evidence of the prosecution. In numerous testimonies, mention is made not only of the defendant on trial at the time, but of other judaizers as well, for observance of a religion has its social aspect whereby others are often present at the time of observance. Simultaneously, because traditions were being transmitted, the sources that supplied that very knowledge are often mentioned in these accounts.¹¹ For the purpose of illustrating the role of judaizing women as well as elucidating crypto-Jewish life, a few cases taken from sixteenth century trials in Castile will now be analyzed. The sagas of two families appearing in the proceedings of the trials of the In-

10. For a short study on the type of information available in witness testimonies as well as *tachas*, or attempts to disqualify these witnesses (and its use in reconstructing village life), see *idem*, "The Conversos of Cogolludo," *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division B, Vol. 1 (1986).

11. For a study of the transmission of knowledge among judaizing *conversas* in Castile, see my article, "The Ultimate Challenge: Safeguarding the Crypto-Judaic Heritage," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 53 (1986).

quisition¹² will serve this purpose; both are from the Castilian village of Alcázar and, it turns out, are even related.¹³ We are fortunate in having rich and descriptive sources which deal with, among other things, judaizing mothers and their children.

One such family is that of Elvira de Mora and, in particular, her daughter Isabel and her son Lope. The story of the daughter, Isabel de la Vega, wife of Francisco de Yepes of Alcázar, comes to light during the trial of a neighbor and cousin, Juan del Campo. In Isabel's testimony, which was presented in 1590, she discussed her observances and the sources of her knowledge. The latter became a matter of great interest to the inquisitors as early as 1500, for they realized that, by discovering the identity of the teachers, they could ferret out the origin of the heretical activities and destroy the core of the judaizing. At any rate, Isabel first related¹⁴ that her cousin, Mari Lopes of Alcázar, told her to observe the Law of Moses and especially to observe the Sabbath as a holy day. Mari contended that her cousin's mother was an evil woman for having neglected her duties to her daughter and to her religion; thus, Isabel should abandon the teaching of Jesus Christ and observe the Law of Moses, which was beneficial for the salvation of the soul. Therefore, she should observe the Sabbath as of Friday afternoon. Isabel¹⁵ believed her cousin, and that Jewish law would lead to salvation, so she began to prepare meals for the Sabbath before sundown and to avoid work on the Jewish day of rest.

Interestingly enough, Isabel's mother, Elvira de Mora, had not neglected her duties in the least; it seems that, while at first Isabel tried to attribute her proclivities to this cousin, she later requested a second audience with the inquisitor in order to clarify the issue of her judaizing. In this revised version, additional activities emerged, which include observance of Passover, some purity laws, and observance of the New Month. In Isabel's own words:

She said that it is true that she had requested an audience and she wanted it in order to tell and confess the whole truth that indeed she had not been upset . . . the situation is that she was of tender age, more than forty-five or forty-six years (ago), and that she did not understand that she had a mother who was as evil as was hers who had taught her children things that were so offensive to Our Lord. And that her aforesaid mother and Luisa de Mora [probably an aunt] knew all of the Law of Moses and she (the

12. These trial records were obtained from the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, Spain, under "Papeles de Inquisición de Toledo." The two interrelated trials are Legajo 138, número 8 (1590-1594) of Juan del Campo, and Legajo 187, número 8 (1590-1591) of Francisco de Vega and Ana del Campo. Legajos, or files, will be abbreviated as leg.; the numbers as n°, and the pages, or *folios*, as p.

13. There is a distinct possibility that the husbands of the two mothers mentioned were brothers; in Leg. 187, n°8, p. 11v, María de la Vega lists a number of her relatives, and specifies that the children in these families were cousins.

14. See leg. 138, n°8, p. 8v.

15. Ibid., p. 9r.

mother) taught it to her and she had done so and observed until thirteen or fourteen (years ago), following the law. But she did not discontinue (her observance) then, she did not come to this Holy Office to seek a remedy and she did not come to declare this; not out of evil intentions concerning these holy and honored men to whom with all her heart she declares and cries out, having put her mother in such a terrible state and living in fear these past twelve or thirteen years.

Her mother told her to observe the Sabbath, dressing up on Friday evenings and preparing food on those same Fridays for the entire Sabbath. And in this way observing the Sabbath, preparing meals on Friday for the Sabbath and changing the sheets on the beds (to clean ones), and wearing clean blouses on the said Sabbath, and celebrating it as a holiday, and cleaning the oil-lamps on Friday afternoons and placing clean wicks into them and throwing out the oil, and lighting them until they died out by themselves. And her aforesaid mother said that one must observe the festivals of the Jews, and this (confessant) only remembers one festival that falls on the Holy Week, that lasts seven or eight days, and in this festival one eats unleavened bread and washes one's body after one has undressed, and her said mother did likewise. And the confessant and her mother used to cut their nails and when they grew, they threw them into the fire. They did the same for their hair that fell out while being combed, and she does not recall when the other festivals fell except that they were observed and celebrated and her said mother told her when they fell and that she also recalls observing the first day of the month as a holiday, and she does not remember anything else that was done, that only too well had (she) wanted to remember in order to tell him that she wants the salvation of her soul more than anything in this world, for one has but one soul which one does not want to lose.¹⁶

One cannot overlook the fact that this detailed confession occurred an entire century after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain! Sometime in the course of the 1540s, Isabel began to observe the Sabbath, Passover, purity rites, and Rosh Hodesh with her mother. [She later adds washing herself after menstruation.]¹⁷ Isabel herself admitted to judaizing for some thirty-odd years!¹⁸ We see, however, that the concern of the confessant at the time of her statement was, and understandably so, with the salvation of her soul and her hope that the very act of confession would enable her to be forgiven by the Church. Nevertheless, it is obvious that not only her cousin but, more significantly, her mother took it upon herself to teach Isabel; Elvira de Mora was only one of many judaizing mothers who chose to transmit her knowledge of her heritage to her children.

As a matter of fact, this same mother, repudiated as evil by her niece for *not* judaizing and later damned by her own daughter because she *did*

16. Ibid., pp. 9v-10r.

17. Ibid., p. 10r.

18. There is a slight chronology problem here, for Isabel stated at the outset that she was in her forties. Her mother would not have initiated her in crypto-Judaism before the age of nine or ten and even that would have been an early age. If so, she would be in her fifties. She would then be considerably older than she stated, and it seems that her sense of time is inaccurate. Her brother stated that he, too, was in his forties, but does not mention which of the siblings is older.

judaize, succeeded in teaching her sons as well. The first inkling one has of any sibling participation emerges after reading an addendum¹⁹ to Isabel's confession. At times, so it seems, her brothers joined in observing with her and her mother, wearing clean shirts on the Sabbath and holidays, and, according to Isabel, *kashering* meat because women were forbidden to do so. Isabel explained that they would remove the fat from fresh meat, which was then methodically soaked in water and salt for the purpose of cleaning and removing the blood from the meat. The de la Vega boys had been instructed in the process of *kashering* meat in addition to observance of the Sabbath and festivals.

The testimony of one of these brothers, namely, Lope de Vega,²⁰ fortuitously appears in these trials proceedings.²¹ This son, a field laborer who was in his forties, claimed that, when he was thirteen or fourteen, his mother, Elvira de Mora, taught him to keep the Sabbath by preparing food in advance for the Sabbath day and, if possible, wearing a clean shirt. She also taught him some eight or nine prayers, one of which he recited in full to the Tribunal.²² Elvira also forbade pork consumption and eating the fat of animal meat. Her son recalled that some other holidays had been observed, but could not remember precisely which ones except for the fast on Yom Kippur.

Lope noted that his mother, when explaining Sabbath observance to him, simply stated that "this is how it must be done."²³ He later added that she insisted that abiding by Jewish law would be beneficial for salvation,²⁴ and one would consequently go to heaven. This resident of Alcázar made it very clear that observance was done without the knowledge of his father; he concluded by stating that, once his mother passed away (in about 1570), although he had more or less already ceased practicing Jewish rites and was eating pork and the suet of meat, he nevertheless continued to believe in her teachings for another fifteen years (until about 1585). Not only did this mother serve as the teacher and inspiration of her children, but her family also preserved an impressive number of Jewish observances. Lope and Isabel mentioned hallowing the Sabbath by wearing clean garments and preparing food in advance; Isabel added that she and

19. Pp. 10r-10v.

20. The name de la Vega and de Vega appear interchangeably in all the testimonies and trials under discussion. I have attempted to use whichever name was used at the time.

21. This is part of Leg. 138, n°8, pp. 4v-5v and also appears in Leg. 187, n°8, pp. 14-15v. It was common practice to extract or copy a portion of one trial which was relevant to another trial and transfer a copy of the material, noting the source of information.

22. This prayer, from Leg. 187, n°8, p. 14v, has been dealt with elsewhere and will soon be published in the *Proceedings of the Conference at the University of Maryland*, (Spring, 1991), "In Iberia and Beyond: Hispanic Jews Between Two Cultures" (University of Delaware Press).

23. Ibid., pp. 14r-14v.

24. Ibid., p. 15v.

her mother engaged in candle-lighting and the changing of bed linens. Lope was taught how to prepare meat according to Jewish law and instructed not to eat pork. Isabel was aware of the above observances and of some of the purity laws; she also remembered celebrating Passover. It is remarkable that Elvira de Mora and her children managed to be such active judaizers without alarming the father/husband; this, however, is one secret which was not revealed in their confessions.

Confessions of the members of another branch of this family likewise reveal a great deal about the role of women in judaizing, and include accounts from 1590 by the son and the daughter of a *conversa* who indoctrinated them both in Judaism. The siblings' accounts can be compared, for the brother and sister testified in concomitant trials.²⁵ The thirty-four year old scribe, Francisco de Vega of Alcázar, declared that his mother, Leonor Gómez, taught him to judaize when he was ten or eleven years old, explaining to him that the Law of Moses was beneficial for the salvation of his soul. Thus, in observance of the law, he prayed in the Jewish manner, covering his eyes, and washing his hands prior to engaging in prayer. He also fasted from sundown to sundown on the day of Yom Kippur, and was taught to observe the Sabbath as a holy day, donning a clean shirt and putting clean linens on his bed. Because of the nature of his profession, he could not "afford"²⁶ to discontinue his work on the Sabbath day, but attempted to preserve its holiness in his heart.

Francisco's younger sister María, aged thirty, also gave her testimony in 1590, and, as will be seen, provided a fuller account of judaizing life. She told of a visit by another crypto-Jewish woman named Mari Lopes de Armenia²⁷ who, some twenty-odd years earlier (ca. 1568), had insisted that their widowed mother begin to observe the Law of Moses. Mari was specific

25. This family appears in the same set of trials as the previous family; the sister's testimony appears in Leg. 138, n°8 (1590-1594) and her brother's is in Leg. 187, n°8 (1590-1591). Actually, the sister appears in Leg. 187, n°8, p. 11v, as well. They were apparently on trial themselves at the time, and had mentioned the names of others involved in judaizing; thus, their statements were used for the trials of other defendants. Then they were brought in to ratify their previous statements and possibly to make additions. According to a list on p. 2v of Leg 138, n°8, the siblings were reconciled to the Church; however, the list of defendants tried at the Inquisition of Toledo contains the name of a Francisco de Vega of Alcázar who was a scribe and was condemned, so his fate will have to be looked into further. See M. Gómez Campillo, *Catálogo de las causas contra la fé seguida ante el Tribuno del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición de Toledo*. Sección Judaizantes (Madrid, 1903), p. 233.

26. This could mean an economic consideration or that it would be too risky for a man in his profession not to work on the Jewish Sabbath.

27. It is almost a certainty that this María López de Armenia is the same Mari Lopes of Alcázar mentioned above by Isabel de la Vega, for her own husband, Francisco Ruíz de Armenia, refers to her as María López (Leg. 138, n°8, p. 7v); if so, she was an active leader in judaizing as she visited family after family and succeeded in convincing them to observe various rituals. As a matter of fact, on this same page, her husband, Francisco, declared that María had persuaded and instructed *him* to observe!

that the Sabbath must be honored by lighting candles on Friday night, by placing clean wicks in the candlesticks and then letting them burn out by themselves; in addition, the linens were to be changed on Fridays. No pork was to be eaten, and all meat was to be thoroughly washed, carefully rinsing away the blood.²⁸ Later she included mention of a ceremony, most likely a reference to the appropriate blessings for beheading poultry, which were then beheaded and consumed without a trace of blood.²⁹

During the week, nails were to be cut short on Tuesdays, at which time one was supposed to wash oneself as well.³⁰ Thursdays, however, were designated as fast days, with the fasts lasting from sunrise to sunset.³¹ María and her brother were persuaded to observe by their mother, this Mari, and a third as-yet unnamed *conversa*. In contrast to his sister, Francisco apparently was not consistent in his judaizing, and observed mainly at the insistence of his mother. Because he lived on his own, he was able to do as he pleased and would placate his mother when visiting in her home by joining her in Jewish practices on these occasions.³²

Nevertheless, María continued to observe with her mother and told of the eight days of Passover that were celebrated and the *masah* that was made and supplied to them by the same two *conversas*; apparently all four women ate unleavened bread together for three consecutive years. Leonor's daughter recalled that Yom Kippur was called the "holy day" for fasting; she was under the impression that they were supposed to fast for three entire days but admitted that she was able to sustain a fast of only one full day.³³ María also remembered being taught how to pray in the Jewish manner as well daily as on the Sabbath day: she explained that

28. María's account appears in Leg. 138, n°8. These observances are listed on pp. 18r-18v; there is also a short testimony in Leg. 187, n°8, p. 11v.

29. Leg. 18, n°8, p. 20v.

30. There is a great likelihood that Tuesday here was actually Tuesday evening, the beginning of the fourth day of the Hebrew week. The eminent Sephardi commentator on liturgy and customs, David ben Joseph Abudraham, discussed this custom in his *Sefer Abudraham* (Seville, 1340; published in Lisbon, 1490). Finger and toenails were to be cut on Wednesday or later in the week, but before the Sabbath. The reason given is that the first three days of the week are perceived as belonging to the previous week; thus, performing this ritual from Wednesday on is construed as an act in honor of the coming Sabbath. Abudraham even specifies the precise order of digits in which one is properly to cut one's nails.

31. For some reason, Monday was not included as one of the two traditional fast days during the week.

32. There is apparently a correlation between Francisco's level of observance and his mother's mental well-being. She seems to have suffered a breakdown of sorts and then began to claim that she had been deceived by the Jews. At one point in her testimony, María states that her mother went mad; see Leg. 187, n°8, p. 11v. In a different testimony, her daughter describes her as suffering from "melancholy;" see Leg. 138, n°8, p. 19r. If the time of this malady could be dated, perhaps there would be a correlation with the arrests made of fellow judaizers, as the Inquisition bore down quite hard upon the *converso* community of Alcázar in the sixteenth century.

33. Leg. 138, n°8, p. 19v.

one's feet must be kept together and one's hands folded; then one touched the eyes a few times with one's hands. These prayer instructions were provided by María's mother and the two other women.³⁴ Although various prayers had often been recited by her brother, her mother and the other women, in 1590 María could recall only a line or a part of a line from a psalm.³⁵

Whether only a portion of a psalm could be remembered or an entire psalm could be recited, as was by María's cousin, Lope de Vega in his testimony, the significance was no different. These judaizing families perpetuated Jewish laws and customs to the best of their abilities and memory. Needless to say, had these trials transpired in the earlier part of the century, the *conversos* involved might have been actual converts from 1492, or at least would have had contact with the Spanish Jewish community prior to the Expulsion. For a clandestine religious community to have retained as many Jewish rites, for as long as they did, is commendable.

For the sake of comparison, before assessing the women's roles, *per se*, let us again review the observances mentioned by the two sets of brothers and sisters. To begin with, some degree of Sabbath observance stands out both in the frequency of observance and in the number of details retained by the judaizers. This is extremely common in Spanish crypto-Judaism, and not at all surprising in light of the central role of the Sabbath in Jewish life and the repetitiveness of the Sabbath in the course of the week. A fully halakhic Sabbath cannot be expected of these individuals; nevertheless, a statement was being made by them: on this Jewish day of rest, the judaizer was observing to the best of his or her ability and knowledge. Essentially, both of the sisters mentioned were preserving the traditionally female rite of candle-lighting on Friday night, with an awareness that the fire should burn out by itself and not be extinguished, as was, indeed, done very other night of the week. Isabel cleaned the lamps and replaced the wicks. Francisco and María as well as Isabel changed their bed linens in honor of the Sabbath; Isabel, Lope and Francisco would don clean blouses, and Isabel pointed out that she would dress up. Isabel and Lope were taught that the Sabbath meals must be prepared in advance; Francisco was told simply to keep this day holy. All in all, one receives a rather clear picture of the significance of the Sabbath for these judaizers.

Prayer was recited daily and on the Sabbath, at least the prayers that could be recalled. These particular *conversos* were unusual in that the memory of prayer had actually survived.³⁶ Lope recited a full prayer, claiming that he'd been taught eight or nine of them; Francisco had cov-

34. *Ibid.*, p. 20r. Suddenly, María names the second woman as Catalina Gómez; María López de Armenia had a sister by this name.

35. The line recited was, "Señor, seña si [A]donay es el tu nombre." *Loc. cit.* The Psalms were very popular among the judaizing community; see Levine Malammed article to appear in U. of Md. conference proceedings (1991) (footnote 22 above).

36. A reading of over one hundred files from an earlier period (1492-1520) contains mention of praying, but almost no recitations of any prayers or psalms.

ered his eyes and washed his hands; María recalled the washing of the hands and using a clean cloth for this purpose, and she also recited a line from a psalm. Since these prayers had not been recited for some time and had been transmitted orally, it is not at all surprising that so many were forgotten. It was enough, however, in the eyes of the Inquisition, to remember and identify with a Jewish or crypto-Jewish prayer or even a portion of one, to lead to the damnation of these judaizers.

Fasting and holidays were observed by crypto-Jews in varying degrees. Traditionally, Yom Kippur was the holy day best remembered by the judaizers; it was seen as the path to salvation for their Jewish souls. They knew that in their double-lives as overt Catholics and covert Jews, they had amassed many sins and had ample need for repentance. The fact that Judaism designated a day of atonement which appealed to the very depths of their beings, should come as no surprise. Thus, Francisco fasted from sundown to sundown; María thought she had to fast for three days and only had managed one. At the same time, the knowledge that one should fast weekly was passed on to María as well, although only one and not the two traditional days were known to her. On the other hand, the observance of Passover, the festival of freedom, so important symbolically to the judaizers, was retained in both families; María ate unleavened bread with her mother on this holiday for at least three years, and Isabel also mentioned this observance in her family. Needless to say, this was a difficult task to execute unnoticed, and many crypto-Jews feared being detected during the eight-day period.

The only other holiday mentioned in these proceedings is by Isabel; she referred to Rosh Hodesh, the first day of the new month, a traditional day of observance for Jewish women. The other holidays, such as the festivals of Sukkot and Shavuot or Rosh Hashanah, somehow faded from the memory of the majority of the judaizing community in Castile.³⁷ Needless to say, fulfilling a commandment such as the building of a sukkah would be difficult, indeed.³⁸ On the whole, because of the special significance of Yom Kippur and Passover for the crypto-Jews, the memory of these particular holidays persevered.

On the other hand, dietary laws, ever so dangerous to maintain in the crypto-Jewish household, were not forgotten, probably because they are such an integral part of daily Jewish life. Keeping in mind the fact that the standard diet in the Iberian Peninsula is far from accommodating to the observer of these laws, the judaizer concerned with not eating pork or shellfish would most certainly stand out in this society. Nevertheless, both families under discussion, along with so many other judaizers, attempted to preserve some aspect of the traditional laws. Lope removed the suet or fat from the meat, *kashered* it with salt and cleansed it appro-

37. The fact that the reading of Torah portions assumes a large role on these days may partially account for this lapse.

38. In the early trials of the late fifteenth century, there is occasional reference to the building of a sukkah; the judaizers would go out into the fields and build a booth out of the sight of potential informers.

priately with water, removing the blood as per Jewish law. María reported similar activity in her home, in addition to the ceremonial slaughter and *kashering* of poultry. In both families, individuals, namely Lope and María, refrained from eating pork as well as they could. The above are but a few examples of the numerous ways in which crypto-Jews attempted to preserve the Jewish dietary laws as they perceived them.

Last among the observances mentioned in these particular proceedings are the purity laws. Obviously, the ritual bath was no longer available; nevertheless, both María and Isabel were taught to cut their nails. The former was only instructed to wash on the same day, whereas the latter threw the clippings along with her fallen hair into the fire and even bathed after completing her menstrual cycle. These observances were based on Jewish law and were clearly identifiable as Jewish.

All of the above were taught to sons and daughters by their mothers and other *conversa* women in the community. While there are, indeed, male leaders³⁹ who emerged in this and other communities, the women emerge in the Inquisitorial proceedings as having an overpowering concern for the preservation of the Jewish tradition. The examples presented here are from late sixteenth century Castile; needless to say, the testimonies of these sisters and brothers taught by their mothers represent but a small sample of judaizers. However, the image of women in Spanish crypto-Judaism from earlier periods is consistent with these findings. These women participated in a society which was denied both the right to observe its religion publicly and the means to learn formally and transmit its laws and rituals. Yet they were not deterred, for their steadfast ties and commitment to Judaism left them no alternative but to preserve the Jewish heritage as authentically as possible.

Crypto-Jewish women observed Jewish laws with and without the support of their husbands, in a society where traditional male roles were severely limited; in essence, the judaizers were more or less forced to restrict their observances to the confines of the home. This is precisely the locale in which women traditionally have a more active role; the exigencies of the situation demanded that the women now function as the prime guardians of tradition. Consequently, the mothers were those who most frequently taught their children; these women struggled to preserve any and all traditions that they could and to transmit them, if possible, to their offspring. One must not forget that each and every time they observed the Law of Moses, these crypto-Jews risked their very lives; nevertheless, so many of them remained loyal to Judaism and testified to this loyalty in the face of the Inquisition.

39. A perfect example of a male leader was Juan del Campo, the defendant in Leg. 138, n°8 (1590-1594). He was known to all the judaizers of Alcázar, although he was not a native of the village, but, rather, a relative of many of the residents. He had had possession of a book, apparently a prayerbook, from which he taught and copied prayers for other judaizers. See U. of Md. Conference article for further details (footnote 22 above).

The Impact of the Expulsion from Spain on the Jewish Community of Pre-Revolutionary France, 1550-1791

GÉRARD NAHON

Translated by Deborah Greif

Introduction

THE EXPULSION FROM FRANCE, DECREED BY Charles VI on September 17, 1394, marked the official end of the Jewish community in the French Kingdom. Nonetheless, the “Jews of the Pope” from Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin (soon reduced to the Jews of Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and Lisle-sur-Sorgue), and the Jews of Provence (expelled in 1501 shortly after the 1481 union of Provence and France), survived on the borders.

In the long term, demographic movements from outside of France created a new Jewish community in that country. In the Southwest, a slow immigration of converted Jews from the Iberian peninsula began in the 16th century, continuing to the end of the 18th. In the Northeast, the French monarchy tolerated the Jewish populations in Lorraine and Alsace, regions acquired only in the 17th century. In this manner, Jewish communities emerged, living on the margins of French society and territory. The *legal* existence of Jews in France remained unthinkable until the Revolution. Following political action by delegates of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, the Constitutional National Assembly, on January 28, 1790, accorded to Jews the title of “active citizens.” This action was a prelude to the Emancipation of September 27, 1791, the first in Europe.¹

1. A first version of this article was discussed at the 37th International Congress of Historic Sciences in Madrid in August, 1990, during sessions organized by the International Association of Historical Societies for the Study of Jewish History (AIHSSJH), that was on August 18, 1990 and was entitled “Spanish Jewry and Its Dispersion, Its Influence on the History of Spain and on Jewish History.” It was also discussed during a debate at the Centre Universitaire Rachi in Paris on November 6, 1990 on the theme of “Sephardic Exiles: From Persecution to the Renaissance.” We refer to Bernard Blumenkranz, ed., *L'Histoire des juifs en France* (Toulouse, 1972); S. Schwarzfuchs, *Les Juifs de France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975); René Moulinas, *Les Juifs du Pape en France, les communautés d'Avignon et du Comtat Venaissin aux 17^e et 18^e siècles* (Toulouse, 1981); and Danielle Iancu-Agou, *Les Juifs en Provence (1475-1501) de l'insertion à l'expulsion*, preface by Georges Duby (Marseille: 1981).

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How did the expulsion, decreed by Spanish monarchs on March 31, 1492, impact on a practically non-existent French Jewish community? How, in the long run, did the expulsion from Spain influence the territorial, political, judicial, linguistic, and cultural condition of a community cut off from its medieval roots? Did it change the image of the Jew in the French Kingdom? Did it help to re-integrate Jews into the Kingdom?

We will consider in turn:

- the history of Jews in France from the 16th century to the Revolution
- two aspects of Jewish immigration from the Iberian Peninsula to France:
 - the integration of the “New Christians”
 - the structure of the Portuguese Jewish “Nation”
- the politics of the community before and during the Revolution
- a theory concerning the Jewish community born out of the classical type of destruction which emerged in medieval Spain.²

1. *French Jews 1550-1791*

Was there a Jewish community in France that could receive the exiles from Spain? To some extent, as the following example might suggest. One hundred and eighteen Aragonian Jews, captured at sea by Bartholomée Laufredi, captain of a galleon from Nice, landed in Marseille. The Jewish community there took out a loan of 1500 crowns on August 21, 1492, to pay their ransom. A letter in Hebrew was sent to other communities to publicize these efforts and to solicit the remaining 240 ducats for the ransom. David bar Shelomoh was named as agent in charge of this collection. The Aragonians were finally freed, but we do not know if they stayed in Marseille thereafter. It should be noted, however, that the expulsion of the Jews from Provence had become effective in 1501.³ Some other Spanish refugees had settled in the communities of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin.

The real immigration resulted *indirectly* from the 1492 expulsion and began in the first years of the 16th century. New Christians, often natives of Spain who had chosen exile in Portugal in 1492 and had been forcibly converted *en masse* there in 1497, arrived in France, forg-

2. G. Nahon, “The Conversos in France in the 16th to the 18th Century” (in Hebrew, summary in English), *Culture and History, Ino Sciaky Memorial Volume*, ed. Joseph Dan (Jerusalem, 1987), pp. 185-203. Most of the sources can be found in G. Nahon, *Les “Nations” juives portugaises du Sud-Ouest de la France (1684-1791) Documents* (Paris, 1981).

3. Isidore Loeb, “Un convoi d’exiles d’Espagne à Marseille en 1492,” *Revue des Études juives*, vol. IX (1884): 66-76; A.H. Freiman, “Un document concernant la rançon des captifs dans la France méridionale au XVe siècle,” *Kobetz al-Yad*, vol. VI (Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 248-254; Joseph Shatzmiller, “La solidarité juive au Moyen-Age et ses limites: histoire et contre-histoire,” *Minorités et marginaux en France méridionale et dans la Péninsule ibérique (VIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: CNRS, 1986), pp. 412-427.

ing the most common exit path from the Iberian Peninsula. Fleeing the Portuguese Inquisition, which began in 1536, they established themselves at first in Navarre, le Labour, Bordeaux, and Lyon. Others just passed through, reaching the Spanish Netherlands before heading toward Italy. Hence, we find some Portuguese families travelling on the roads of Alsace, then a part of the French Empire. On May 20th, 1544, the Emperor Charles V commissioned Georges of Laxau, the Imperial Captain in Ratisbonne, to arrest "the false Christians and other merchants who sell arms to the Turks." On June 20th, 1544, in Sainte-Croix-en-Plaine (in Haut-Rhin) his deputy, Jean Vinsthing d'Utrecht arrested two carriages carrying 16 adults plus two more carriages with 43 Portuguese Jews heading for Venice. In Herrlisheim-près-Colmar (in Haut-Rhin) he arrested two more carriages with 22 adults, mostly from Portalegre.⁴

The most fortunate of those seeking to live in the French Kingdom requested individual Letters Patent from the King. In August, 1550, their delegates, François de Castro, Louis de Berga, and 21 Portuguese, received from Henry II the *Letters of Naturalization and Dispensation for the Portuguese Called "New Christians."* These Letters Patent authorized settlement in France, and the acquisition of goods, participation in commerce and industry, and transmission by inheritance. They were renewed in 1574, 1656, 1723, and 1776, and constituted the charter for communities set up in Bordeaux, Bayonne, Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Nantes, La Rochelle, Rouen, Lyon, Paris, and other Southwestern locales such as Bidache, Lagastide-Clairence (in the Atlantic Pyrenees), and Peyrehorade (in the Landes), as well as settlements on the Atlantic coast like Le Havre. These Letters Patent did not apply to Jews but to "New Christians" or "Portuguese Merchants."⁵ The 1394 expulsion of Jews from France remained in force; the Letters Patent of Louis XIII affirmed this more than two century-old expulsion on April 23, 1615. Parliament confirmed the Letters Patent on May 18, 1615, and they were set down in modern royal legislation.⁶

We can see the beginnings of a return of Jews to the Eastern part of France. On August 6, 1567, four Jewish families received permission to settle in Metz, which had been French territory since August 6, 1552. As their numbers grew, Louis XIV accorded them Letters Patent in 1657, and Metz became the largest Jewish community in the Kingdom. The annexation of Lorraine in 1766 increased the number of Jewish

4. X. Mosman, "Un épisode inédit de l'histoire des juifs de Portugal," *Archives Israélites*, vol. XXVII (1866), pp. 1043-1048, 1089-1094.

5. The Letters Patent are published in *Les "Nations" juives portugaises* cited above.

6. *Lettres patentes du Roy portant commandement à tous Juifs et autres faisant profession et exercice de judaïsme, de vider le Royaume, pays et terres de son obéissance, à peine de la vie, et de confiscation de leurs biens. Verifiées en Parlement le 18 mai 1615* (Paris: F. Morel & P. Mettayer, 1615).

communities in the region. When Alsace was annexed in 1648, Jewish communities were preserved, and increased through German immigration. On July 10, 1784, Letters Patent defined the status of the 25,000 Jews in Alsace, who were the majority of the 40,000 Jews in France. The remaining 15,000 Jews were divided among 7,500 in Lorraine, 2,500 in Avignon and 5,000 Portuguese Jews, generally in the Southwest. Jewish groups from the counties (Avignon and Venaissin), and from Bordeaux, Alsace and Lorraine organized in Paris in the 18th century. In 1788, one year after the grant of civil status to Protestants, the Minister of State, Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, set up a commission representing Portuguese Jews from the Southwest, and from Lorraine and Alsace, in order to set up by-laws for the Jews of the Kingdom. In the same year, the Royal Academy of Metz studied various reports, including that of the Abbot, Henri-Baptiste Grégoire, responding to the question: "Are there ways to make Jews happier and more useful in France?" When published, this report became the classic *Essay on the Physical, Moral and Political Regeneration of the Jews* (Metz 1789). The destiny of the Jews now began to change in the realm of politics and in the broader realm of thought. The National Constitutional Assembly debated their destiny and, on September 27, 1791, voted a decree integrating "Jewish individuals" into the common law by according them the rights of "active citizens."⁷

2. *The Portuguese New Christians, an Integrated Model*

Three different communities emerged from the diaspora caused by the expulsion from Spain. The first, encompassed the exiles of 1492 speaking "judeo-espagnol," who settled mostly in the Ottoman Empire. The second, included those communities founded in the 17th century by the descendants of Jews converted in Portugal in 1497, in Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, and the Americas, where they spoke Portuguese. The third, included the "Portuguese" communities in France. They were officially "Christian," but reverted over time to overt Judaism. They spoke Spanish and inscribed it on thousands of sepulchers in Bayonne, Bordeaux, Peyrehorade, Bidache, and Labastide-Clairence from the beginning of the 17th century.⁸

7. The fundamental work is David Feuerwerker, *L'Emancipation des juifs en France, de l'Ancien Régime à la fin du Second Empire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1976). Many works about this period appeared during the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the French Revolution. Patrick Girard, *La Révolution française et les juifs* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989); Robert Badinter, *Libres et égaux . . . l'Emancipation des juifs 1789-1791* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

Bibliography in Maurice Liber, *Les Juifs et la convocation des Etats Généraux (1789)*, bibliography by Roger Kohn, preface by Gérard Nahon (Paris-Louvain: E. Peeters, 1989). 8. The best picture of the diaspora is in *The Sephardi Heritage*, vol. II, *Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal*, edited by R.D. Barnett and W.M. Schwab; *The Western Sephardim, The History of Some of the Communities Formed in*

The medieval Jewish community, such as survived in the papal enclave, and such as existed in French Lorraine and Alsace, was constrained by its status of legal inferiority. It was defined by its geographic, economic, and cultural isolation as well as a considerable degree of autonomy. In Metz, Jews lived in a separate quarter, known as the "Arsenal." In Alsace, Jews, who were forbidden to live in the cities, concentrated in the villages. Being forbidden entrance to the guilds and denied ownership of land, Jews survived through peddling to the poor, trading in animals, foraging, and furnishing money for pledges. They spoke "judeo-alsacien" and "judeo-lorrain" and read nearly only Hebrew. To go to Paris, they needed a special passport, which was very difficult to obtain. The Letters Patent on Alsatian Jews further restricted their right to marry. Rabbis set religious and civil law, based on the talmudic legislation recognized by their tribunals. At their behest, a *Collection of Laws, Customs and Practices of the Jews of Metz Relating to Contracts of Marriage, Guardianship . . .* (Metz 1790) was compiled and edited. All the discussions on improving the condition of the Jews in France were aimed at the inhabitants of Lorraine and Alsace, the Ashkenazim of Old France. Following the November 28, 1787 *Edict on the Civil Status of Non-Catholics*, the Ashkenazim inscribed their names on the registers of births, marriages and deaths for the first time, while the Portuguese abstained.

The Portuguese in Bayonne and Bordeaux, considered "Christians" theoretically, did not suffer from the same constraints as did Ashkenazi Jews. There were no ghettos in Bordeaux or any of the other localities inhabited by the Portuguese. Their Letters Patent accorded them the same economic rights as French natives. Some bought houses and goods, and a few even purchased country manors, such as Jacques Nuñez de Pereyra of Bordeaux, "squire, viscount of la Menaude, baron of Ambès, seigneur of Colineyra in Portugal and other places." The most fortunate went into banking or maritime armaments, particularly in Bordeaux. The exemplary dynasty of the Gradis made its fortune in the maritime trade and saw its influence grow in the Jewish community, in Bordeaux, and with the royal government. These "Portuguese," a term that became synonymous with "Jew," were subject to French law — though, to aid the poor and protect their interests, they formed a separate body and elected trustees. These trustees inscribed baptisms, marriages and buri-

Europe, the Mediterranean and the New World after the Expulsion of 1492 (Grendon, Northants: Gibraltar Books, 1989); see also G. Nahon, "The Sephardim of France," pp. 46-74. Cf. G. Nahon, "The Spanish Register of Circumcisions by Samuel Gomes Atias (Bidache 1725-1773)," *Bull. hisp.*, vol. LXXXVI, no. 1-2 (1974): 142-182. On the mostly Spanish funerary inscriptions, cf. G. Nahon, "Inscriptions funéraires hébraïques et juives à Bidache, Labastide-Clairance (Basses Pyrénées) et Peyrehorade (Landes)," *Rapport de mission I. Bidache/REJ*, vol. CXXVII (1968), pp. 223-252; vol. CXXVII (1968), pp. 347-365; vol. CXXVIII (1969), pp. 349-375; CXXX (1971), pp. 195-230.

als in parish registers. The most distinguished of the Portuguese of Bordeaux were accorded the title of "bourgeois," with its attendant privileges. The banker, Jacome Alexandre, the merchant-draper Moïse Mendes, the merchant Raphaël Mendès, and other Portuguese, were included in the *List of the Bourgeois of Bordeaux*. Jacob Rodriguès Pereyre, a renowned, learned man, received a pension from Louis XV. Jean-Baptiste Silva became physician to the King. While the Portuguese practiced Judaism overtly in the 18th century, the prerogatives of their rabbis were reduced: the Talmud was neglected, and lay people administered the community.⁹ French permeated familial correspondence, official registers¹⁰ and prayer rituals, as evinced by the *Daily Prayers of the Portuguese or Spanish Jews*, translated by Mardochée Venture (Nice 1772).

How do we explain this successful integration? Frances Malino suggests that prolonged survival in the heart of Catholicism in Spain and Portugal, and a level of religious dissimulation in France, led these Jews to effectuate a compromise between Judaism and modernity. They were able to make the compromises necessary to obtain citizenship, and were able to give up community autonomy. The tragedy of Spanish Jewry during the Inquisition also offered the French thinkers of the Enlightenment a rather positive and different image of Jews from the medieval stereotype. Voltaire writes of Spanish fanaticism:

In Madrid, in Lisbon, the fires are lit,
These burning pyres, where unhappy Jews
Are each year, like kindling, sent by the priests
For not having abandoned the religion of their ancestors.

In 1788, the Polish Jew, Zalkind Hourwitz, presented a dissertation

9. We cite from the very rich bibliography on the Portuguese communities in France: Th. Malvezin, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: 1875; 2nd edition, Marseille: 1976); G. Nahon, "Théophile Malvezin et l'histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux, biographie et mise à jour bibliographique," *Bulletin de l'Institut Aquitain d'études sociales*, no. 30 (1977): 7-26; H. Léon, *Histoire des Juifs de Bayonne* (Paris, 1893; 2nd edition, Marseille, 1976); G. Cirot, *Recherches sur les Juifs espagnols et portugais à Bordeaux*, part I (Bordeaux: 1908); G. Cirot, *Les Juifs de Bordeaux, leur situation morale et sociale de 1550 à la Revolution*, vol. 1. (no other volumes published) (Bordeaux, 1920); Frances Malino, *The Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux: Assimilation and Emancipation in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France* (Alabama: 1978), trans. by Jean Cavignac under the title *Les juifs sépharades de Bordeaux: assimilation et émancipation dans la France révolutionnaire et impériale* (Bordeaux: 1984). See also the *Livre des Bourgeois de Bordeaux (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Bordeaux: Société ds Archives Historiques de la Gironde, 1898); Renée Neher-Bernheim, "Un savant juif engagé: Jacob Rodrigue Péreire (1715-1780," *REJ*, vol. CXLII (1983): 313-451; Richard Menkis, "Patriarchs and Patricians: the Gradis Family," *From East and West. Jews in a Changing Europe 1750-1870*, eds. Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 11-45; Jean Cavignac, *Dictionnaire du judaïsme bordelais au XVIIIe et XIXe siècle. Biographies, généalogies, professions, institutions* (Bordeaux: Departmental archives of the Gironde, 1987).

10. On Bordeaux cf. Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Les registres des délibérations de la Nation juive portugaise de Bordeaux (1781-1787)* (Paris, 1981).

to the Royal Academy at Metz, suggesting Bordeaux as a model for hoped-for changes in the Jewish condition. Malino writes:

His model for these changes, moreover, is the Sephardic community of Bordeaux, a community for whom the Talmud exercised little, if any influence.¹¹

3. *The "National" Model*

Somewhat curiously, as we have noted above, the Portuguese did not hurry to profit from the edict on non-Catholics of 1787, and did not enter themselves on the civil registers. In this particular, the model of integration no longer worked. The Portuguese had their own civil registers, and — as we know from their participation in Malesherbes' commission of inquiry in 1788 (see section 4) — they sought to maintain control over their membership.¹²

Although the Portuguese did not live in ghettos, certain streets such as the Bouhaud, des Augustins and Tombeloy in Bordeaux, and the Saint-Esprit district in Bayonne, delimited Jewish quarters. The fiction of "New Christians" survived in only a few administrative documents. Prerogatives were limited in practice. Jews could not practice every profession or enter the guilds. The rules of the "Nation" of Bayonne in 1752 and of Bordeaux in 1760, approved by Louis XV, gave coercive powers to the leaders of the communities. They could set taxes both for the communities' needs and for the king's profit. These powers were buttressed by the royal representative, the Intendant of Guyenne. This relationship with royal authority may be part of a medieval tradition coming from Spain. It both delimited and guaranteed the autonomy of the community. It suggested official recognition of the Jewish "Nation," without according a legal existence to the Jewish religion. The relationship retained an ambiguous status until the last years of the Old Regime. The "Portuguese" developed close relationships with Amsterdam, London, Livorno, and other hosts to the Sephardic Diaspora, because of familial relationships and common origins. These common origins brought closer links with the Holy Land. The holy cities

11. Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. VIII, ed. L. Moland (Paris: Garnier, 1883), p. 136; cf. S. Schwarzfuchs, *Les Juifs de France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975), p. 196; Frances Malino, "Attitudes toward Jewish Communal Autonomy in Pre-revolutionary France," *Essays in Modern Jewish History. A Tribute to Ben Halpern*, eds. Frances Malino and Phyllis Cohen-Albert (London-Toronto, 1982), p. 105. See also Frances Malino, "The Right to be Equal: Zalkind Hourwitz and the Revolution of 1789," *From East and West. Jews in a Changing Europe 1750-1870*, eds. Frances Malino and David Sorkin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 11-45.

12. G. Nahon, "Prospective des 'portugais' du Sud-Ouest de la France à la veille de la Révolution," *Politique et Religion dans le judaïsme moderne: des communautés à l'émancipation. Actes du Colloque tenu en Sorbonne les 18-19 novembre 1986*, ed. Daniel Tollet (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987), pp. 85-104.

of Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias sent learned rabbis to Bayonne and Bordeaux, charged with aiding their academies. These emissaries preached in Spanish in the synagogues of these cities, bringing together cultural and liturgical references, and they transmitted the kabbalistic traditions of Jerusalem and Safed.¹³

In the 18th century, the political and cultural system of the Portuguese "Nations" evolved. Regulations were developed on home government, education, kosher meat and wine, internal taxation, and the administration of charities. Ultimately, the "Nation" gained an accredited representative at court, one Jacob Rodriguès, with whom the "Nation" refused to combine. Pereyre, who obtained and had printed the Letters Patent of 1776. The Portuguese "Nation" protected its prerogatives against the Teutonic Jews from Germany and Avignon. These events are all inscribed in the *Register of the Deliberations of the Portuguese Nation of Bordeaux*, which is currently published.

In the cultural realm, given the slow infiltration of French, the perpetuation of Spanish as a vernacular and literary language gave birth to a literature which was somewhat hidden at first. Exemplified by Filotheo Eliau Montalto, Antonio Enriquez Gomes, Diego Enriquez Basurto, and João Pinto Delgado in the 17th century, the literature became more overtly rabbinical in the 18th century, with Yshak de Acosta, Abraham Vaez, Mordehay Gutiérrez, and Abraham David de Léon. Finally, Hebrew re-emerged with Rabbi Raphaël b. Eléazar Meldola, author of learned rabbinical books printed in Amsterdam. Some historians set forth these developments as a model of integration, but we prefer the aristocratic model invoked by the proponents of the Emancipation of the Jews.

4. *Politics of the Portuguese Before and During the Revolution*

The government of Louis XVI, anticipating the legalization of Judaism in France, put Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, minister of the King's household, in charge of the project. Malesherbes invited the trustees of the Portuguese "Nation" of Bordeaux to express their vision of how to better the condition of the Jews in France. They submitted a *Memoir Presented by Messrs. Lopès Dubec père and Furtado aîné*,

13. On Jewish quarters, cf. G. Cirot, *Recherches sur les juifs portugais de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux, 1908), pp. 188-191. Regulations of Bayonne published in G. Nahon, *Les "Nations" juives . . .*, pp. 172-211; of Bordeaux in S. Schwarzfuchs, *Le Registre des Délibérations . . .*, pp. 293-297. On relations with Amsterdam cf. G. Nahon, "Les rapports des communautés judéo-portugaises à la France avec celle d'Amsterdam au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle," *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 77-84; *Studia Rosenthaliana*, vol. X, 1976, fasc. 1, pp. 37-78, fasc. 2, pp. 151-188; G. Nahon, "Les émissaires de la Terre sainte dans les communautés judéo-portugaises du Sud-Ouest de la France au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles," *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel*, vol. III (University of Haifa: 1974), pp. 145-176 (in Hebrew, summary in French).

Deputies of the Jews of Bordeaux, to M. de Malesherbes, Minister of State in June 1788. A section is headed: "Viewpoints of the delegates of the Jewish nation on the sort of constitution that Jews particularly want in France." The project involved the following main issues: the maintenance of national "structures" regulating the civil status of each individual — the home, taxes, and the acquisition of individual liberties; access to corporations, municipalities, schools, colleges and universities with religious restrictions; and the extension of control by the "Nation" over its members. Indeed, the report reads:

No Jew or Jewess can settle in the kingdom or move from city to city without being vouched for by the Assembly of the "Nation" and gaining two thirds of the votes. In areas where Jews are not organized, Jews can be received only when carrying testimonials of their lives and conduct.¹⁴

As is known, the project languished in ministerial file cabinets. During the convocation of the General Estates, the Jewish "Nations" of Bordeaux and Bayonne obtained permission to participate in electoral activities only with much difficulty.

A 109-member primary assembly of the "Nations" of Saint-Esprit-les-Bayonne was held before the royal notary Duhalde on April 18, 1789. It adopted a *Notebook of Complaints and Demands and Remonstrances of the "Nation,"* and elected Jacob Silveyra, Salomon Furtado Jeune, Benjamin Nunes-Tavarès, and Mardochee Lopès-Fonseca as deputies to the Assembly of the Three Orders of the Bailiff's Court of Tartas. Bordeaux and Bayonne thought at first that the Declaration of the Rights of Man would guarantee the rights of the Jews, but their opinion changed, and they joined with the delegates from Alsace and Lorraine to obtain an explicit text advocating Jewish rights. Eastern, Ashkenazi French Jews, faced with the overt hostility of the deputies of their regions, hesitated to demand full rights of citizenry. The Jews of Bordeaux and Bayonne pressed their advantage. David Silveyra, a deputy of the Jews of Bayonne, addressed the National Assembly in January, 1790. His speech was founded on a traditional view of the history of Spanish Jews, according to which "all descend from ancient families of the tribe of Judah, who, when permitted to re-establish the Temple, never profited from this freedom." Silveyra asked to "maintain the right of election and eligibility, already in evidence in the illustrious Assembly which would determine their fate."¹⁵ On January 28, 1790, the Assembly voted to accord to Jews from Portugal, Spain and Avignon the rights of "active citizens." A breach was thereby opened in the exclusion of Jews from society since medieval times. The law dealt with only a minority of Jews, but it did include the Jews of Avignon. However, the Ashkenazi Jews of Alsace and Lorraine had to battle and wait patiently for nearly two

14. See footnote 12.

15. Text published in G. Nahon, *Les "Nations" juives*, pp. 322-327.

more years for the Emancipation decree of September 27, 1791, which recognized the political rights of all the Jews of France, thus marking the end of the Jewish “Nation.”¹⁶ The Portuguese rapidly took advantage of their political rights. Under the Convention, the Jews of Saint-Esprit-les-Bayonne, re-baptized Jean-Jacques Rousseau, participated in a “reconstructed” municipality, a revolutionary municipality. Gabriel Soarez was elected the first Jewish mayor in contemporary France in this municipality. Jews also played an important role in the government of the region, in the Committee of Surveillance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which wielded full political, military and economic powers during the Terror.¹⁷

5. *The Impact of the 1492 Expulsion: From Short to Long Term*

In the short term, Jews expelled from Spain established themselves throughout the Ottoman Empire; at the end of the 15th century communities appeared which were direct descendants of those of Spain. Though France is geographically very close to the Iberian Peninsula, Judaism had practically no legal existence there, since there were practically no Jewish communities to welcome the refugees. Hence, immigration centered mainly on converted Jewish families coming from Portugal — Jews who, having masked themselves with Catholicism, continued their religious dissimulation in France. In the long term, a new type of Jewish community evolved out of the three-century long immigration into France.

The first component of the Jewish community of Old France, the Portuguese Jewish “Nation,” settled in the judicial, regional, economic, and linguistic landscape of France between the 16th and the end of the 18th century, while maintaining its Iberian tradition of political and cultural autonomy. Its leaders and spiritual heads developed the aristocratic tradition of Spanish Jewry during the Enlightenment until the tribune of the National Constitutional Assembly. They sought and obtained an Emancipation decree which recreated the status of Jews in the Roman Empire. This project became the project of the Jews of France and of the Jews of Europe. Did this goal, cited in David Silveyra’s address to the National Assembly in January, 1790, reflect a long-term plan, or, rather, more immediate tactical considerations?

The trustees of the Portuguese “Nation” had set up a reform plan in 1788 giving Jews equality of status while conserving and strength-

16. G. Nahon, “*Séfarades et Ashkenazes en France: la conquête de l’Emancipation (1789-1791), ‘Les Juifs dans l’Histoire de France,’*” under the direction of Myriam Yardeni, Institute of French History and Civilization at the University of Haifa (Leyde: 1980), pp. 121-145.

17. Cf. Ernest Ginsburger, “*Le comité de Surveillance de Jean-Jacques Rousseau-Saint-Esprit-les-Bayonne. Procès verbaux et correspondance 11 octobre 1793 — 30 fructidor an 11* (Paris: 1934; 2nd edition, preface by Pierre Hourmat, Bayonne: 1989).

ening autonomous institutions. However, barely two years later, in 1790, in exchange for full political rights — a possibility unforeseen in 1788 — they gave up their claims to autonomy. Frances Malino posits that their Marrano experiences had taught them to cope with changing attitudes toward the Jews. Despite their doubts regarding the effect of emancipation on the preservation of traditional Jewish life, the Ashkenazi Jews followed the Portuguese along the path which they had taken. The Portuguese model became the French one and, then, the European one.

The destruction of the classical form of the medieval Jewish community, seen in Spain in 1492, was followed by a long process of acculturation in France of the New Christians from the Iberian Peninsula. This process was abruptly accelerated by the French Revolution, which transformed the members of the Jewish "Nation" into citizens of the first nation-state of Europe, the Kingdom of France.

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Echoes of the Spanish Expulsion in Eighteenth Century Germany: The Baer Thesis Revisited

JACOB J. SCHACTER

YITZHAK BAER'S *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* is a magisterial presentation of the dramatic story of one of medieval Europe's most significant and colorful Jewries. Utilizing a vast array of Hebrew, Spanish and Latin primary sources, and in control of an extensive secondary literature, Baer traces the history of Spanish Jewry from the days of the early reconquest of parts of the Iberian peninsula from the Moslems in the eleventh century until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.¹ But it is also much more than a history of a particular Jewry. In the process, it presents a definite philosophy of Jewish history, one which is stimulating, comprehensive and controversial.

In its broad outlines, Baer's thesis can be described as follows:

1) The essence of Judaism for all time is defined "by the sages of the Mishnah," who taught "a mythic, monotheistic folk religion . . . Even the dialectic method of [its] study bore a mytho-theological character." These sages "set up guiding principles for a pietist way of life," and were endowed with an "intuitive religious sense which did not need the aid of Greek science." It was they who, after the Exile, formulated

. . . the duty of martyrdom . . . in the words, "One must submit to death in preference to apostasy" . . . Their attitude was conceived in an atmosphere of mythological thinking where care was taken not to couch religious ideals in rational terms.²

For Baer, Mishnaic Judaism is authentic Judaism. Since he considered it to be mythical and non-philosophical, any mode of thinking which does not fit this mold is foreign to Judaism.

2) As a result, philosophical rationalism is considered an alien importation which never lost its alien character. Even after it became accept-

1. The book first appeared in two volumes in Hebrew as *Toledot ha-Yehudim bi-Sefarad ha-Nozrit* (Tel Aviv, 1945). A second, revised edition appeared in 1959 in one large volume. An English translation, with the title, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, was published by the Jewish Publication Society of America in two volumes: Vol. I, "From the Age of Reconquest to the Fourteenth Century" (Philadelphia, 1961) and Vol. II, "From the Fourteenth Century to the Expulsion" (Philadelphia, 1966). In his preface to the second volume of the English translation, Professor Baer noted that it "really should be considered a third edition of the book "because of the new material included in it. All following references will be to the reprint of the two-volume English translation (Philadelphia, 1971).

2. Y. Baer, *A History*, I, pp. 7, 9, 10, 11-12, 14.

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ed by a significant number of Jews, a fact which Baer readily acknowledges, it never became part of the authentic Jewish experience. This should be contrasted with Kabbalah, which, due to its basically non-philosophical mythical character, was much more in keeping with pure, pristine and unsullied (mishnaic) Judaism. Although it, too, came into the Jewish community from the outside, it more closely approximated the mythical, symbolic character of authentic Judaism, and can thus be considered as an acceptable extension of it.

3) The broad masses of Spanish Jews remained true to their religion, while the aristocracy was less secure in its faith. It was specifically the exposure of "the courtier class" to philosophic rationalism, or "Averroism," which had a deleterious effect on their religious observance and eroded their level of commitment to Torah and *mizvot*. By relativizing religious faith, philosophy caused upper-class Jews to lose their sense of the uniqueness of Judaism, thereby undermining their traditional faith and observance, and leading them to estrangement from their ancestral religion. The spiritual corruption of the aristocracy, caused almost solely by philosophical speculation, stands in stark contrast to the total, whole-hearted, simple faith of the masses uncontaminated by exposure to philosophy.³

4) By dangerously eroding Judaism from within, philosophy made its aristocratic adherents vulnerable to conversion to Christianity when historical conditions lent themselves to this possibility. It was the alien and corrosive philosophy which paved the way for conversion, because it created an entire group of (aristocratic) Jews who, while formally adhering to Judaism, lost its inner spirit and meaning and who, therefore, were susceptible to the seduction of the Christian faith when confronted by the onslaught of a militant Christianity. Contrast this to the less sophisticated masses of Jews, "the artisans," who remained true to their heritage even under very trying conditions. Baer wrote:

In the fifteenth century, as in previous ages, religious Averroism existed as a historical force undermining the foundations of Jewish national and religious unity.

The Averroistic outlook, in fact, exercised a marked influence in several areas of the social and religious life of the Jews in Spain, and proved decisive in the fateful hours of their history. The descendants of these highly cultured aristocrats were to betray both their faith and their people during the period of great trial which lasted from 1391 through 1415.

The artisans had always been the most faithful element in Spanish Jewry. During the mass conversions of 1391-1415, many devout artisans remained steadfast while educated Jews betrayed their religion and their people.⁴

5) While the Spanish aristocracy was tainted by its philosophical

3. Ibid., I, pp. 3, 97 and *in passim*, throughout the book.

4. Ibid., II, p. 258; I, p. 240; II, p. 354. See also I, p. 100.

orientation, Franco-German Jewry was much closer to the pristine essence of mishnaic Judaism because it was free of the corrosive influence of philosophy. It was the

...old lore, developed into a well-integrated system [which] infused into the people its life's breath and led it on to the stage of history. The sages of the Mishnah gave it authoritative formulation. In Germany and France, Jewish scholars made wholehearted adherence to it the guiding principle of Jewish life, [unlike the rationalist contemporaries] of Judah Halevi and other Spanish aristocrats.⁵

As a result, upper-class Spanish Jews exposed to philosophy converted en masse to Christianity at their time of crisis while, in their similar hour of destiny during the First Crusade, the classic German Jewish response was martyrdom as mandated by Jewish (i.e. mishnaic) tradition.⁶

While a full treatment of all the multi-faceted components of this broadly conceived thesis is beyond the scope of this paper, such an investigation would yield some of the following conclusions: the mishnaic tradition is broader than Baer would have us believe, and includes an aristocratic/rational component in addition to the *völkish*, pietistic/mystical one which he stressed; both philosophy and Kabbalah represented attempts on the part of halakhically observant Jews, who were unsatisfied with traditional Talmudism, to combine it with other, meta-halakhic, elements that would provide the greater degree of meaning and spirituality for which their souls yearned; philosophy did not cause the problem of assimilation for Spanish Jewry but was, rather, a symptom of it and, it can be argued, "saved" at least as many people as it misled; certain strands of medieval Kabbalah could be just as "dangerous" as philosophy and, therefore, both had the equal capacity of preserving Judaism or leading one away from it; neither the controversy over philosophy nor the conversion vs. martyrdom dichotomy (to the extent to which it existed) can be neatly divided along class lines; the sharp contrast between a closed, pious, martyrdom-prone German Jewry and an open, skeptical, conversion-prone Spanish Jewry is oversimplified and misleading.⁷

5. Ibid., I, p. 75.

6. Ibid., I, pp. 37, 65, 97; II, pp. 130-31.

7. Some of these issues were raised by I. Sonne, "On Baer and His Philosophy of Jewish History," *Jewish Social Studies*, IX (1947), pp. 61-80. See also Y.H. Yerushalmi, "Baer's History, Translated and Revisited," *Conservative Judaism* XXI (1966): 73-82 and the passing comment in I. Twersky, "Aspects of the Social and Cultural History of Provencal Jewry," *Jewish Society Through the Ages*, ed. by H.H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger (New York, 1971), p. 189, n. 15: "On the whole, Professor Baer's thesis needs modification." I owe much of my thinking about this matter to Professor Yerushalmi, and to Professor Twersky, in whose Harvard University classrooms I was first exposed to it in the mid-1970s.

See also H.H. Ben-Sasson, "*Dor Golei Sefarad 'al 'Azmo*," *Zion* XXVI:1 (1961): 59-64; Moses A. Shulvass, "Crusades, Martyrdom, and the Marranos of Ashkenaz," *Between the Rhine and the Bosphorus* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 1-14; Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York, 1969), p. 85. For apostasy in medieval Ashkenaz, see Jacob Katz, *Ibid.*, pp. 67-76; Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, 1987), pp. 99-105;

One of the reasons that at least part of Baer's thesis sounds plausible and convincing is that he is echoing, in a refined and reformulated way, what many Spanish Jews themselves were saying in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. There were a significant number of moralists in Spain at that time who railed against the deleterious effects of philosophy among aristocrats, who blamed the religious laxity of the members of the courtier class, and ascribed their subsequent conversion to Christianity in large numbers to the corrosive effects of that alien and dangerous discipline, and who, in general, attributed the material and spiritual ills of Spanish Jewry to its influence. This is a major motif in such works as R. Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov's *Sefer ha-Emunot*, R. Shlomo Alami's *Iggeret Musar*, R. Hayyim ibn Musa's *Magen va-Romah*, R. Isaac Arama's *'Akedat Yizhak* and *Hazut Kashah*, R. Meir ibn Gabbai's *'Avodat ha-Kodesh*, R. Yosef Hayon's *Mili de-Avot*, R. Yosef Yavez's *Or ha-Hayyim*, and in several works by R. Yizhak Abarbanel, all of whom, together with others, opposed philosophy not only on purely conceptual grounds (it taught false ideas) but on practical grounds as well (it led to a breakdown of Jewish religious praxis).⁸

for martyrdom in southern Morocco during the Almohade invasions in the middle of the twelfth century in a community under Sephardi influence, see Ya'akov Moshe Toledano, "Te'udot mi-Kitvei Yad," *HUCA* IV (1927), pp. 453, 456; H.Z. Hirschberg, "al Gezerot ha-Mayhadim ve-Sahar Hodu," *Sefer ha-Yovel le-Yizhak Baer* (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 138-39, 147; *Idem.*, *A History of the Jews in North Africa I* (Leiden, 1974), pp. 127-28.

For an earlier critique of the courtier class for *not* engaging in philosophy, see Bezalel Safran, "Bahya ibn Paquda's Attitude toward the Courtier Class," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. by I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp. 155-62.

For an example of a philosopher who does express reservations about martyrdom, see Bernard Septimus, "Narboni and Shem Tov on Martyrdom," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* II, ed. by I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), pp. 447-45.

For others who support Baer's thesis, implicitly or explicitly, see Gerson D. Cohen, "Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim," *Studies of the Leo Baeck Institute*, ed. by Max Kreutzberger (New York, 1967), pp. 147-56; H.J. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust in Rabbinic Literature* (Ktav, 1977), pp. 85-86; B. Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain* (New York, 1972); Frank Talmage, "Trauma at Tortosa: The Testimony of Abraham Rimoch," *Medieval Studies* XLVII (1985): 379-415. My thanks to Dr. Benjamin R. Campel for bringing this last reference to my attention. See also Azriel Shohat, *Milhemet Kodesh u-Martirologiyah* (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 132-33; Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, 1984), p. 84. One of the reasons Haym Soloveitchik gives for the propensity of Ashkenazic Jews for martyrdom is their lack of a philosophic orientation. See H. Soloveitchik, "Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazic Example," *AJS Review* XII:2 (1987): 213-14.

One thing should be clear. We are dealing here with issues that lay at the heart of medieval Jewish intellectual history.

8. For information about the battle against philosophy in Spain during this time featuring these individuals as well as others, see Y. Baer, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 241; II, pp. 234-43, 253-59, 443; Sarah Heller-Wilensky, *R. Yizhak Ar'amah u-Mishnato* (Jerusalem, 1956); Yosef Hacker, "Mekomo shel R. Avraham Bibago bi-Mahloket 'al Limud ha-Filosofiya u-Ma'amadah bi-Sefarad bi-Me'ah ha-Tet Vav," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-'Olami ha-Hamishi le-Mada'i ha-Yahadut* III (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 151-58; Gedalyah Nig'al, "De'otav shel R.Y. Yavez 'al Filosofiya

After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, this trauma was added to the list of tragedies which befell Spanish Jewry due to its excessive involvement with philosophy. Those who experienced this unexpected, shocking and cataclysmic event struggled to find some meaning or explanation for it, and instinctively opted to subsume it under the paradigm of previous Jewish responses to catastrophe. In keeping with the classical propensity of Jews to blame themselves for their own misfortunes (*"u-mipnei hata'enu galinu me-arzenu"*), contemporary moralists also perceived the expulsion as a punishment for their sins. And, among the litany of sins which they committed, the sin of studying philosophy occupies a leading role. This argument is pointedly made in R. Yosef Yaveẓ's *Or ha-Hayyim*, but it can be found elsewhere in the literature of the period as well.⁹ Furthermore, having been introduced into the literature of those opposed to philosophy at that time, this linkage between the expulsion of 1492 and the excessive devotion of Spanish Jews to philosophy became a staple of the subsequent anti-philosophy polemic. It was destined to reappear in settings far removed from its original context, geographically as well as chronologically.

One of the places where this linkage reappears is in the writing of Rabbi Jacob Emden, who lived in eighteenth century Germany. R. Emden is primarily known in historical circles as the virulent opponent of the Sabbatian movement, whose explosive controversy with R. Yonatan Eybeschütz indicated the lengths to which he was prepared to go to extirpate what he considered to be this blatant heresy from the Jewish community. But he was much more than a one-dimensional hunter of heresy. He was, in addition, a first-rate talmudist and halakhist, an accomplished grammarian, and a highly prolific author, whose literary oeuvre contains commentaries encompassing all the genres of rabbinic creativity (the Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, liturgy, and codes) as well as a major ethical tract, a kabbalistic dictionary, an autobiography, several sermons and eulogies, and hundreds of responsa. As a result of his large multifaceted oeuvre, R. Emden can justly be considered one of the foremost Jewish intellectual figures of the eighteenth century.¹⁰

u-Mitpalsifim, Torah u-Mizvot," *Eshel Be'er-Sheva* I (1976), pp. 258-85; Isaac E. Barzilay, *Between Reason and Faith* (The Hague, 1967), pp. 133-49. Dr. Isadore Twersky's "Talmudists, Philosophers, Kabbalists: The Quest for Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century," *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Bernard D. Cooperman (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 431-59 contains much important material on our subject.

For another example of the linkage between exposure to philosophy and apostasy, see Ephraim Kupfer, "Hezyonotav shel R. Asher bi-R. Meir ha-Mekhunah Lemlein Reullingen," *Koveẓ 'al Yad XVIII* (1975), p. 406.

9. For R. Yaveẓ, see his *Or ha-Hayyim* (Lublin, 1912), p. 26; G. Nig'al, *Op. cit.*, pp. 260, 264. See also Y.H. Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah* (Cincinnati, 1976), p. 51, n. 127.

10. For a full-length treatment of this fascinating figure, see my *Rabbi Jacob Emden: Life and Major Works* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; Harvard University, 1988).

Throughout his writings, R. Emden displayed a negative attitude toward philosophy. In brief, his argument can be described as follows: Philosophers lack any heteronomic awareness of the basis of law, they deny God's role in the governance of the universe, and consider the world to be "*hefker*," attributing every occurrence therein to chance. As a result, they feel bound to follow only that which their logic accepts as reasonable, a position which allows them to justify a life of hedonism and a concomitant rejection of Torah law. In fact, argues R. Emden, it is adherence to philosophy which was responsible for the destruction of both Temples, as well as other major Jewish tragedies throughout our history, including, he suggests, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.¹¹

One of the clearest formulations by R. Emden of his negative attitude to philosophy and the tragic historical consequences of its study can be found in his *Iggeret Purim*. Responding to his critics during the controversy with Chief Rabbi Eybeschütz, who accused him of disrespect for Maimonides, R. Emden wrote:

Regarding that which they further sought to ascribe to me an iniquity which is a sin¹² in my pen, in that I criticized even the early masters ("*kadmonim*") like Maimonides and Radak to provoke arguments, *new as well as old* (Song of Songs 7:14), to move the lips of those that are asleep,¹³ this too I will not deny that I spoke against the book *Guide of the Perplexed* which, in my opinion, was never authored by the same Maimonides who created the book *Yad ha-Hazakah* in which we glory.¹⁴ Unless we say that as rich as he surely was in wisdom, at that time [when he wrote the *Guide*] he was poor.¹⁵ (Or, perhaps, there were two Rambams. Even though in *Sefer Mada* there are also found some of the mistaken notions of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, perhaps it [i.e., the *Guide*, was written by] someone who wanted to choke, and hung himself on a big tree.) I cannot imagine that such a great stumbling block could come forth from the hand of a man great among the Jews¹⁶ in Torah and good deeds as R. Moses, famous for his good name, *flawless in beauty* (Ezekiel 28:12). For that book, the *Guide*, is full of blemish. In truth, it contradicts Torah and faith, more than could be believed, were it to be told¹⁷

Verily it is true¹⁸ that I did not invent the slander about this book. For immediately after its birth it acquired a bad name that it was born with a blemish. All the true scholars of that generation hated it, despised it, considered it abominable, erased it and some burned it. No one selected it except for the heretics, deserted and forsaken like the wilderness,¹⁹ who choose a profligate life.²⁰ They will take from it withered proofs and rea-

11. For an analysis of R. Emden's attitude toward philosophy, see *Ibid.*, pp. 548-86.

12. Cf. Hosea 12:9.

13. Cf. Song of Songs 7:10.

14. For R. Emden's position on the Maimonidean authorship of the *Guide*, see my *Rabbi Jacob Emden*, pp. 580-81; 655, n. 329.

15. The parenthesis appears in the original text.

16. Cf. Esther 10:3.

17. Cf. Habakuk 1:6.

18. Cf. Genesis 8:13.

19. Cf. Isaiah 27:10.

20. This charge of hedonism against the "heretics" is also emphasized elsewhere in R.

sons and fragile conjectures to ridicule Torah, prophecy, deeds, reward and reverence²¹

In any case we have not found in the records of the wise men of the generations anyone who permitted becoming involved in it. Rather, Nahmanides, Rashba and the French scholars, men of greatness, all immediately repudiated it and revealed its nakedness in the presence of all her lovers²²

After presenting his opposition to philosophy in general and to the *Guide for the Perplexed* in particular, R. Emden turned his attention to the deleterious effects of its study, and cited, in particular, the works of R. Yosef Yavez:

Experience proved that this book was a stone of striking and a rock of stumbling²³ to the House of Israel and a cause of damages. It caused the destruction of the Jewish communities in Spain That land was formerly like the Garden of Eden, its dwelling almost as important as the land of Israel. It grew mightily in wealth, generosity, wisdom and significance. And from the day they became involved in philosophy, *they became grievously corrupt* (Hosea 9:9). They cast the teachings of their mother behind their backs.²⁴ *They continually decreased* (Genesis 8:5) until they were exiled from that land; nothing was left behind.²⁵ The involvement [with] this book was the cause of their troubles.²⁶ Without any doubt in the world, it is the direct cause, as the pious ones of the generation rebuked them for their shame. (Study in detail the works of the great admonishing preacher among the exiles from Spain, our Master R. Yosef Yavez.)²⁷

R. Emden's attribution of a number of Jewish tragedies, including the Spanish Expulsion, to the diabolical influence of philosophy first appeared in his earliest full-scale attack on that discipline, printed in the first volume of his *Siddur* in 1747. He wrote:

They were the sinful stumbling block for the house of Israel at the beginning of its flowering. They pursued idolatry only to permit themselves (involvement in) public immorality, *to the utter ruin of moist and dry alike* (Deuteronomy 29:18). All the evil of the days of the First Commonwealth emerged from this *stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood* (Ibid., 29:17), the source of the filth

It is this that was the peg upon which was fixed²⁸ the evil throughout

Emden's works. See his *Siddur 'Amudei Shamayim* I (Altona, 1747), pp. 248b-249a; *Siddur Sha'arei Shamayim* II (Altona, 1747), pp. 75b-77a; *Sefer Bivat Migdal 'Oz* (Jerusalem, 1969), p. 47a; "Hali Ketem," *Derush Tefillat Yesharim* (Cracow, 1911), p. 26a-b.

21. Cf. Zachariah 3:8.

22. Cf. Hosea 2:12.

23. Cf. Isaiah 8:14.

24. Cf. Nehemiah 9:26.

25. Cf. Exodus 10:26; lit., "not a hoof remained behind."

26. Cf. Judges 11:35.

27. *Iggeret Purim*, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Ms. Mich. 618, p. 33a. This selection is printed in my "Rabbi Jacob Emden's *Iggeret Purim*," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature* II, ed. by I. Twersky (Cambridge, 1984), p. 445.

This passage should be added to the list of sources cited by Gedalyah Nig'al, "Hashpa'ato ha-Safrutit shel R. Yosef Yavez," *Kiryat Sefer* LI:1-2 (1976), pp. 289-99.

28. Cf. Isaiah 22:25.

the entire period of the Second Commonwealth, whose turbulence ("mehumah") did not rest from beginning to end. From it sprouted all the opposing sects, who rivalled one another and were the cause of the war [against Rome]. Indeed, it was the accursed Greek wisdom ("hokhmah yevanit") which was the cause of our trouble,²⁹ that destroyed the Temple and despoiled the Land of Israel. It was this that caused the dispersion of Jerusalem that was in Sefarad (Obadiah 1:20)³⁰ to be expelled and uprooted from the country of Spain where they had been on a very high level of wealth and wisdom until their hearts became arrogant to exchange the honor of their distinguished, rich and pleasant Torah, which gave birth to them, for the harlot, naked maidservant which is philosophy.³¹

R. Emden continued pressing the point in the second volume of his *Siddur*, completed also in 1747, eight months after the first. After presenting the laws and customs of the Ninth of Av, he bemoaned the fact that Jews neglect their obligation to mourn for the destruction of the Temple, a mode of behavior which, he claimed, is responsible for their prolonged stay in Exile. He blamed this neglect on the Jews' desire "to learn the ways of the Gentiles and, in particular, he castigated his contemporaries for their desire to copy Gentile dress and fashion and to study philosophy, "the accursed Greek wisdom."³² He referred to this discipline as "abhorrent unto God . . . malignant leprosy is in her right hand, a sword for great carnage that presses (Ezekiel 21:19). In her left hand are stored death and destruction."³³ Once again, he blamed philosophy for a succession of Jewish tragedies, including the Spanish Expulsion. He wrote:

And that seducer still dances among us. It is he that also caused the feet of our people in Spain to stumble,³⁴ to exterminate them from there because they delved deeply³⁵ to teach them to be lighthearted with prohibitions [of Jewish law], as mentioned above. They distorted ("hafkhu panim") Torah, contrary to *Halakhah*. They violated the covenant; they nullified the law.³⁷ However, their wisdom is of nought; most of their words increase the vanity ("hevel") of sin. They have no foundation nor root whatsoever; from the pit of philosophy were they dug.³⁸

29. Cf. Judges 11:35.

30. This verse was adduced by Sephardim throughout the Middle Ages as proof of their exalted lineage. For example, see already the beginning of Hasdai ibn Shaprut's letter to Joseph, King of the Khazars, printed in P.K. Kokovtsov, *Evreisko-Khazar'skaya Perepiska v X veke* (Leningrad, 1932), p. 10. See, too, Gerson D. Cohen, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah: The Book of Tradition by Abraham ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1967), Hebrew section, p. 71; English section, pp. 97-98; Moses Maimonides, *Iggeret Teman*, ed. by J. Kapah (Jerusalem, 1972), p. 48; Nahmanides, "Terem E'eneh . . .," *Kitvei Rabbeinu Moshe b. Nahman*, ed. by C. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1963), I, p. 339; R. Moses of Coucy, *Sefer Mizvot Gadol, Mizvat 'Aseh #74*. See, too, H.H. Ben-Sasson, *Op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 23-25.

31. *Siddur 'Amudei Shamayim*, 249a.

32. *Siddur Sha'arei Shamayim*, 75b-77a.

33. Cf. Job 28:22.

34. Cf. Job 12:5.

35. Cf. Hosea 9:9.

36. Cf. Judges 11:35.

37. Cf. Isaiah 24:5.

38. *Siddur Sha'arei Shamayim*, pp. 77a-b. R. Emden went on also to blame "the destruction

This linkage also appeared in two works printed by R. Emden towards the end of his life. In the course of attacking the *Guide for the Perplexed* in his *Mitpahat Sefarim*, first printed in 1768, he noted: "Who knows how many hundreds and thousands left the faith because of this. It is the direct cause for the destruction of many great and mighty Jewish communities and their total eradication from the lands of Spain and France."³⁹ In a work printed one year before he died, he returned to this point for one final time. At the end of a long attack on philosophy he wrote: "Woe, woe. This is what destroyed the first and second Temples and led us into captivity now close to two thousand years. This was also the cause of the expulsion of Israel from Spain . . ."⁴⁰

of the Jews in the land of the Ukraine," presumably a reference to the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-1649, on "the scab of philosophy." In a later addendum to his commentary on the *Siddur*, he added that the expulsions of the Jews from France and Provence in the fourteenth century were also a punishment for philosophical inquiry. See the end of the second volume of Rabbi Moshe Bick's reprint of the *Siddur* (Tel Aviv, 1966), p. 103. The complete text of these addenda are being incorporated into a new edition of R. Emden's *Siddur* presently being printed in Jerusalem by Eshkol Press. For another statement blaming the expulsion on Jewish assimilation into Spanish society, see, *Ibid.*, p. 100. See also *Sefer Birat Migdal 'Oz*, (n. 20), p. 158a, where R. Emden blamed the study of Greek philosophy among Jews in ancient times for the destruction of the Temple. 39. *Mitpahat Sefarim* (Lvov, 1870), p. 62. See too *Ibid.*, p. 84: "This (i.e. the study of 'external wisdom') is what caused the uprooting of the Jewish communities, large in wisdom and in number, from the entire lands of Spain and France."

40. "*Hali Ketem*," (n. 20), p. 26b.

See also *Ez Avot* (Maramarossiget, 1912), p. 59a (on *Avot* V:22) for a general statement: "For whatever and whenever they pursued it (i.e. 'Greek wisdom') it became their troubler and uprooted them from the places they had rested with universal honor."

It is interesting that in *Siddur 'Amudei Shamayim*, p. 31a, R. Emden offered another explanation for the Spanish Expulsion, i.e., Spanish Jewry became too comfortable where they were, and forgot about the centrality of the Land of Israel in their lives. They acted there as if "we already found another Land of Israel and Jerusalem just like it." He also alluded to this in his addenda to the *Siddur*, (n. 38), p. 100.

More research is necessary to determine if references to the Spanish Expulsion are found in the works of R. Emden's contemporaries as well. Perhaps R. Emden was especially conscious of the significance of this event due to the large numbers of Sephardic Jews living in his native Hamburg.

The entire issue of Ashkenazi attitudes towards philosophy is a very interesting one and also requires further analysis. Suffice it to say that there seems to have been a much greater knowledge of, and even appreciation for, philosophy among Ashkenazi Jewry in medieval and early modern times than hitherto believed. See, for example, Ephraim Kupfer, "*li-Demutah ha-Tarbutit shel Yahadut Ashkenaz ve-Hakhamehah bi-Me'ot ha-14 — ha-15*," *Tarbiz* XLII:1-2 (1972-1973): 113-47; *Idem*, "*Sefer ha-Berit u-Ketavim Aherim le-R. Yom Tov Lipman Mulhausen*," *Sinai* LVI:6 (1965): 330-43; *Idem*. and B. Mark, "*Der Renesans in Italya un in Poylin un zayn Virkung oyf di Yidn*," *Bleter far Geshichte* VI:4 (1953): 4-99; H.H. Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 707-11; *Idem.*, "Jewish-Christian Disputation in the Setting of Humanism and Reformation in the German Empire," *Harvard Theological Review* LIX (1966): 369-72; R. Bonfil, "*Sefer 'Alilot Devarim*," *Perek bi-Toledot ha-Hagut ha-Yehudit bi-Me'ah ha-Arba 'Esreh*," *Eshel Be'er Sheva* II (1980): 237; Vladimir Sadek, "Yom Tov Lipman Mulhausen and His Rationalistic Way of Thinking," *Judaica Bohemiae* XXIV:2 (1988): 98-113; Lawrence Kaplan, *Rationalism*

Clearly all of this is more indicative of R. Emden's attitude towards philosophy than of the historic reality of Spanish Jewry. Nevertheless, its significance for the history of the Jews in Spain is clear. Even some two and a half centuries after the expulsion occurred, Spain was still being referred to as a land "like the Garden of Eden" whose Jewish inhabitants were distinguished by their "wealth, generosity, wisdom and significance." The aura of the aristocracy and sophistication of Iberian Jewry, as well as their boasting of a close tie to the elite Jews of Palestine, continued to be felt and articulated long after the last professing Jew left Spanish soil. And certainly it is quite significant that an eighteenth-century attempt to prove the deleterious effects of philosophical speculation found it useful to link such study with the calamity of 1492. For surely philosophy must be the epitome of evil if it could be responsible for so great a tragedy, one whose implications continue to affect the Jewish community one half millenium after it occurred.

and Rabbinic Culture in Sixteenth-Century Eastern Europe: Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe's Levush Pinat Yikrat (unpublished doctoral dissertation: Harvard University, 1975); *Idem.*, "Rabbi Mordekhai Jaffe and the Evolution of the Jewish Culture in Poland in the Sixteenth Century," *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Bernard D. Cooperman (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 266-82. Note, however, the cautionary remark of Haym Soloveitchik, "Religious Law and Change: The Medieval Ashkenazic Example," *AJS Review* XII:2 (1987): 213-14, n. 12.

This issue was most recently discussed in detail in Joseph M. Davis, *R. Yom Tov Lipman Heller, Joseph b. Isaac ha-Levi, and Rationalism in Ashkenazic Jewish Culture, 1550-1650* (unpublished doctoral dissertation: Harvard University, 1990).

Judah Abravanel to His Son

RAYMOND P. SCHEINDLIN

JUDAH ABRAVANEL'S HEBREW POEM TRANSLATED here is an anguished expression of the dislocation experienced by a prominent Jewish aristocrat who was caught up in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. It was written in Italy in 1503.

The author, who is also known as Leone Ebreo, was born around 1460 in Portugal and died between 1523 and 1535, probably in Italy. His father was the famous Jewish financier and scholar, Don Isaac Abravanel, a courtier of Ferdinand and Isabella in the years leading up to the expulsion. While the father achieved lasting fame in the world of Jewish learning for his biblical commentaries and other rabbinic writings, Judah was better known to the Christian world through his influential philosophical work, the *Dialogues on Love*, written in Italian. But although Judah was steeped in, and contributed significantly to, the culture of the Renaissance, he did not convert to Christianity or become a Marrano. Having fled with his father to Italy, he continued the ancient family tradition of combining public activity as a courtier-financier with Jewish communal leadership and rabbinic scholarship. This type of career was not unique to his family, but was a characteristic pattern of the Iberian Jewish aristocracy going back to the days of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (tenth century) and Samuel the Nagid (993-1055 or 1056). It was these early courtier-rabbis who had pioneered the composition of Hebrew poetry on secular themes, using verse patterns borrowed from Arabic. Judah's poem, written eleven years after the expulsion, continues this tradition, even echoing in some of its phraseology the style of the poems of Samuel the Nagid to his son.

To understand the historical moment recorded in the poem, we must briefly trace the story of Judah's illustrious family back to the 1480s.

As Judah recounts in the poem, and as is confirmed by contemporary documents, his father, Don Isaac, had prospered as a courtier to Alfonso V of Portugal (1438-1481). His fortune changed on the accession of John II (1481-1495), when John's determination to assert the power of the throne over that of the nobility led to conflict with Isaac's patron, the Duke of Braganza. It is unclear whether the Duke was actually involved in a rebellion against John or whether the charge was trumped up by the King as a pretext to do away with him; neither is it clear whether Isaac was involved in such a rebellion. What is clear is that the Duke of Braganza and the Duke of Viseu (John's brother-in-law) were executed and that a sentence of death was passed on Isaac (1483). Isaac fled with his son, Judah, who would have been in his twenties, to Castile, where he entered the service of the Catholic monarchs. Judah's son, to whom a large part

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of our poem is addressed, was born in 1491 and named after his distinguished grandfather.

When the edict of expulsion was promulgated, Don Isaac, like other Jewish courtiers, came under pressure to convert rather than leave Spain. A scheme was hatched in Court to kidnap and convert his one-year old grandson and namesake in the hope that the rest of the family would follow suit and remain. Getting wind of the plan, but apparently not yet ready to leave Spain, Judah sent little Isaac to Portugal, possibly to a sister who had remained there, and later fled to Italy with his father. His intention must have been to send for Isaac when he would be established permanently in Italy. But, as explained in the poem, John got wind of the child's presence in his domain and detained him. In 1497, his successor, Manuel I (1495-1521), ordered all children of Jewish refugees in Portugal baptized, including little Isaac. Not only was the forced baptism a crushing blow to Judah's national and religious pride as a staunch member of the Jewish aristocracy who had resisted baptism at great cost; it must also have convinced him that he would never see the boy again.

Our poem was written in 1503, when little Isaac was twelve years old and Judah was serving as a doctor to the Spanish viceroy of Naples. In that year, Don Isaac, who had meanwhile settled in Venice, appeared before the Venetian Council of Ten with a proposal regarding the negotiations between Venice and Portugal about the spice trade. Together with the details of his proposal, Isaac offered to send his nephew, Joseph Abravanel, to negotiate with Manuel; this proposal was eventually approved. It has been suggested that one of Don Isaac's motives in offering to send Joseph to Portugal may have been to engineer the return of little Isaac to his family. If so (and it is only a conjecture), it may have been the prospect of Joseph's trip to Portugal that gave Judah the idea of addressing this poem to his young son.

For Judah's poem is not simply a complaint against Fate, as it has often been called. Though it begins with such a complaint, its true theme is Judah's feelings about the loss of his son; its culmination is an extended and passionate address to the absent boy, in which the father admonishes him to live up to the family traditions and envisions his speedy release. The poem's address to the boy appears not to be a mere rhetorical apostrophe but an actual address meant to be read by the addressee. The urgency of the tone toward the end lends credence to the idea that Judah expected the poem to be delivered and that he had hopes of the boy's imminent release.

We do not, unfortunately, know what happened next. Young Isaac may eventually have reached Turkey, for a Judah Abravanel, generally thought to be Isaac's son, turns up in Salonica in 1558. Isaac could have left Portugal openly in 1507, when the Marranos were given permission to leave. But whether his father's fantasy of their joyous reunion was ever

realized, and, if so, where and under what circumstances, we simply do not know.

A close reading of the poem reveals much about the inner thinking and emotional state of the author. The opening complaint against Time, a personification of blind fate and the vicissitudes of life, is stylized, in the tradition of such complaints borrowed by medieval Hebrew poets from Arabic; yet it stresses certain biographical facts, especially that the author, at the time of writing, had spent much of his life wandering from place to place. This instability, combined with the absence of his son, leads him to wonder whether his illustrious family will end with him and peter out in insignificance in his own time. He seems to want to take action to salvage whatever can be saved of his and his family's fortunes. Paradoxically, his best hope seems to be in further motion. He thinks of leaving Italy, where he has tried to set himself up in several different states, and to make a new start in the Ottoman Empire. But he is held back from making this break by the thought that doing so would reduce even further the possibility that he would ever be reunited with his son.

Judah suffers a considerable burden of guilt for having sent his son away in the first place. Not that he now sees some other course that he might have chosen; he is in the familiar predicament of someone who has taken what seemed to be the better of two bad courses and later feels guilty over the outcome. Judah had sent the boy from the fire of forced baptism in Castile to the flame of forced baptism in Portugal. In retrospect, he seems to think that perhaps the child's chances were better in Spain, where at least the family would have been together and could have eventually, perhaps, escaped together. Perhaps then Judah could at least have personally supervised the boy's secret education as a Jew.

But there seems to be no doubt from the language of the poem that little Isaac was given a secret Jewish education in Portugal. One of the most passionate moments in the poem is the passage in which Judah admonishes his son not to waste his childhood in play, but to study the classics of the Jewish tradition zealously so as to grow into a worthy heir to the family tradition of Jewish scholarship. This passage lacks the tone of regret over the impossibility of educating the boy in the Jewish tradition that we would expect if Isaac were not actually being given a Jewish education. Judah's message is not "If only you could study Torah!" but "Make full use of the opportunity you do have to study Torah." That a baptized Jewish child being raised in a crypto-Jewish family in Portugal should receive a traditional Jewish education in this period, when there were still plenty of learned crypto-Jews available to do the teaching, is quite plausible.

But Judah takes no comfort in dwelling on the difficulty of the original choice to send the boy away or in the fact that the boy is being raised as a Jew. He constantly comes back to his own feeling of being at sea, of looking forward, but at the same time looking backward, of trying to find

a way out of his life of restless wandering, but being held back by the hope of reunion with his son. We even get a glimpse of the strain that the boy's absence put on his marriage, for Judah tells us that his wife blamed him for sending Isaac away, and that, unable to bear her complaints any longer, he finally left her. Whatever conclusions we may draw from this action about Judah's way of handling his marital problem, it is psychologically fascinating that he should attempt to resolve his guilt over sending away his son by exiling himself yet again, especially since his whole complaint against fate is framed in terms of his constant wandering. Clearly, Judah's complaint about his external wandering is also a complaint about a certain internal rootlessness; and his expression of anger against fate is partly an externalization of his guilt over his own personality trait that at least twice in his life led him to choose uprootedness over stability.

Thus, though our poem was written in a language and form that are distinctively medieval, it is in some ways a very modern poem, written at the very threshold of the modern age.*

Time With His Pointed Shafts

Time with his pointed shafts has hit my heart
and split my gut, laid open my entrails,
landed me a blow that will not heal,
knocked me down, left me in lasting pain.
Time wounded me, wasted away my flesh,
used up my blood and fat in suffering,
ground my bones to meal, and rampaged, leapt,
attacked me like a lion in his rage.

He did not stop at whirling me around,
exiling me while yet my days were green,
sending me stumbling, drunk, to roam the world,
spinning me dizzy round about its edge —
so that I've spent two decades on the move
without my horses ever catching breath —
so that my palms have measured oceans, weighed
the dust of continents — so that my spring
is spent —

no, that was not enough:
He chased my friends from me, exiled
my age-mates, sent my family far
so that I never see a face I know —

* The Hebrew text of the poem was published by Hayim Schirmann in *Mivhar hashira ha'ivrit b'italya* (Berlin, 1934), pp. 216-222. I wish to thank Ezra Spicehandler, Steven Geller, and Katherine Washburn for their advice in connection with the translation.

father, mother, brothers, or a friend.
 He scattered everyone I care for northward,
 eastward, or to the west, so that
 I have no rest from constant thinking, planning —
 and never a moment's peace, for all my plans.
 Now that I see my future in the East,
 their separation clutches at my heels.
 My foot is turned to go, but my heart's at sea;
 I can't tell forward from behind.

Yes, Time —

my bear, my wolf! — ate up my heart, cleft
 it in two and cut it into bits,
 so that it aches with groaning, panic, plunder,
 confiscation, loss, captivity.
 But even this was not enough for him; he also seeks
 to snuff my spark, exterminate my line.

Two sons were born to me, two splendid sons,
 two precious, noble, handsome boys.
 The younger I named Samuel. Time,
 my watchful overseer, confiscated him,
 struck him down, just five years old,
 and all that grew from him was misery.
 The elder I called Isaac Abravanel,
 after the quarry where I myself was hewn,
 after one of Israel's greats, his grandfather,
 a man a match for David, Lamp unto the West.
 At birth I saw that he was good,
 his heart a fitting site for wisdom, apt
 repository for the goods
 his forebears handed down through me.
 He was just one year old — alas! — when Time,
 the enemy ever at my heels, took him away.

The day the King of Spain expelled the Jews
 he ordered that a watch be set for me
 so that I not slip away through mountain passes,
 and that my child, still nursing, should be seized
 and brought into his faith on his behalf.
 A good man got word to me in time, a friend;
 I sent him with his wet-nurse in the dark
 of midnight — just like smuggled goods! —
 to Portugal, then ruled by a wicked king

who earlier had nearly ruined me.
 For in his father's time — a worthy king! —
 my father had achieved success and wealth.
 Then this one followed him, a grasping thing,
 a man but with the cravings of a dog.
 His courtiers and his brother schemed revolt.
 He thwarted them and killed his brother; then,
 alleging that my father was with them,
 he tried to kill him too! But God,
 the Rider of the clouds, preserved his life.
 My father fled to Castile, home of my ancestors,
 my family's source. But as for me,
 The King seized all my gold and silver,
 took as forfeit everything I owned.

Now, seeing that my child was in his land,
 and learning that I planned
 to join my father's house in Italy,
 the King detained my child and gave command
 that none should send my stray lamb back to me.
 After he died a foolish king arose,
 fanatical and hollow in head,
 who violated all the House of Jacob,
 turned my noble people to his faith.
 Many killed themselves, rather than
 transgress the Law of God, our help in need.
 My darling boy was taken, and his good name,
 the name of the rock from which I was hewn,
 changed!
 He's twelve years old; I haven't seen him since —
 so are my sins repaid!
 I rage, but only at myself;
 there's no one else but me to bear the blame.
 I chased him from mere troubles to a trap,
 I drove him from mere sparks into a flame.
 I hope to see him, heartsick with my endless hope.

O dear gazelle! What makes you tarry so?
 Why do you thus crush a father's heart?
 Why do you aim your arrows at my inmost parts?
 Why do you dim the light by sending clouds
 and make the shining seem like night to me?
 The moon is always darkened in my sight,

my star is blotted out by clouds;
 no sun's ray ever penetrates my home,
 or crosses my doorsill to reach my beams.
 My roses never bloom on Sharon's plain,
 my grasses never feel the driving rain.
 You steal my very sleep with the thought of you —
 am I sleeping or awake? I cannot tell.
 I cannot touch my food, for even honey
 stings, and sweets taste venomous to me.
 Miserably I nibble coal-burnt crusts,
 moistening with tears my dried-out bread.
 My only drink is water mixed with tears;
 the blood of grapes does not come near my mouth.
 I'm drunk with nothing more than water,
 like a Nazirite or one of Rechab's sons.

But when I dream of your return, and when
 I picture in my mind's eye how you look,
 how good my fortune seems! The rose returns
 to dress my cheek in sanguine once again.
 I sleep and find sleep sweet; I wake
 refreshed, delighting in your lingering image.
 The water that I drink is sweet, and even earth
 tastes sweet when I imagine you are here.
 But when I think about our separation,
 heat blasts my heart, a desert wind within.
 I seem like one dismayed or in a faint,
 diminished somehow and reduced in size.
 The thought of you is joy to me and pain,
 tonic and torment are from you, balm and bane.
 I have your image graven on my heart,
 but also our separation in my core,
 and any joy your image brings to me
 cannot outweigh the reproach your absence speaks.
 Your absence frustrates all my plans,
 your exile blocks, diverts my roads.
 For you my pride is humbled and my dignity
 has fled. I who was a cypress
 now am overtopped by sycamores,
 and hyssops rise above my cedar trees;
 Bats fly higher than my hawks;
 far above my eagles soars the fly;
 My arms and legs are weaker than a boy's;
 a lamb can throw my lions easily.

I've even turned on poetry, smashed
 my lute and hung my lyre upon the willow boughs.
 My song has turned to mourning and my flute
 moans like an echo from within the tomb.
 My swallows hoot like owls, my turtledoves
 howl like jackals, and my pigeons crow.
 I cannot bear the palaces of kings;
 I only yearn to be a hermit in the wild.
 My son! Your banishment has breached me, broken me.
 It crushes me and blocks me from all sides.
 It fills my heart with faintness, fills my thoughts
 with rage, fills my bones with rot!
 And every day I have to hear your mother
 wailing, crying, "Darling, tender sprout!
 Who was the man who stole you from my breast,
 who made a foundling of my body's fruit?"

When I could not bear it any more,
 or hide the suffering that plagued me too,
 I left her and went off to serve my king
 whom God had made my benefactor.
 And so I shift and wander, so I roam
 among the Edomites, nation of the flames,
 never finding healing for my hurt.
 For who can turn Time just,
 Time, who makes me roam the world in shame.
 I cannot bear my futile days and nights;
 Death would be my choice, if choice were mine.
 Life lies heavy on me: days weigh
 like sacks of sea-sand on my back.
 What profit is there in my wretched life?
 Why wait out the time allotted me?
 To a bitter man, life itself is death.
 I've had enough; this little is too much!
 Why should I hope for length of life and years of joy,
 when Time is lurking, raging like a cub-reft bear?
 The days are arrows, and the Bow on high
 is in the hands of Time, that master archer;
 the target is myself. The wheel
 on which Time turns has me as pole.

Let me go back to speaking to my boy,
 for that will make him leave off hurting me.

Now pay attention, son: Know that you
 descend from scholars, men with minds
 developed to the point of prophecy.
 Wisdom is your heritage, so do not waste
 your boyhood, precious boy.
 Think of your studies as pleasure: learning Scripture,
 conning the commentators, memorizing
 Mishna, reasoning out the Talmud
 with the Thirteen Principles, guided by
 the glosses of the ancient Schools . . .
 — But how can I control myself when *he* is lost?
 That is the thought that sickens, strangles, slashes me;
 that is the razor, sharper than any barber's blade,
 that rips the membrane of my aching heart,
 that brings into my miserable heart
 into my very gut the flaming sword:
 To whom will I hand on my scholarship?
 To whom can I pour the nectar from my vines?
 Who will taste and eat the fruit of all
 my learning, of my books, when I am gone?
 Who will penetrate the mysteries
 my father put into his sacred books?
 Who will slake his thirst at my father's well?
 Who will drink at all in this time of drought?
 Who will pluck the blooms of my own garden,
 hew and harvest my own wisdom's tree?
 Who will take my undone works in hand?
 Who will weave my writings' woof and warp?
 Who will wear the emblem of my faith
 when once I die?
 Who will mount my mule or ride my coach? —
 Only you, my soul's delight, my heir,
 the pledge for everything I owe to God.

For you, my son, my heart is thirsting, burning;
 in you I quell my hunger and my thirst.
 My splendid skills are yours by right, my knowledge,
 and the science that has gotten fame for me.
 Some of it my mentor, my own father
 bequeathed to me — a scholar's scholar he;
 the rest I gained by struggling on my own,
 subduing wisdom with my bow and sword,
 plumbing it with my mind. Christian scholars
 are grasshoppers next to me. I've seen their colleges —
 they've no one who can best me in the duel of words.

I beat down any man who stands against me,
 crush and hush my opponent, prove him wrong.
 Who but I would dare to tell the mysteries
 of the Creation, of the Chariot, of its Rider?
 My soul excels, surpasses all the souls
 of my contemporaries in this wretched age.
 My Form is fortified by God, my Rock,
 locked, imprisoned in my body's cage.
 It yearns for you to surpass my degree;
 I always hoped that you would outdo me.

Dear one, what keeps you with an unclean folk,
 an apple tree alone amid the carobs,
 a pure soul lost among the nations,
 a rose among the desert thorns and weeds?
 Set out upon the road to me, my dear.
 Fly, bound like a fawn or a gazelle,
 and make your way to your father's house, who sired you
 (may God protect you, Who protected me!).
 May the Lord give you smooth roads to travel,
 lift you out of straits to my ample court,
 heap upon your head my forefathers' bounty,
 besides my father's and my grandfather's wealth.
 Then He will light my spirit in its darkness,
 and redirect my footsteps to the plain.

I now commend my son to God, my shepherd,
 and cast my burden on my Highest Father.
 He will bring my dear son to my presence:
 When I call, my darling boy will hear.
 Then I will sing a love-song to my Maker,
 hymning my passion to Him while I live,
 bringing my offering, setting my gift before Him.
 My song it is that binds me to my Holy One.
 The best of me is in it: my heart and eyes.
 O may it please Him like the Temple rams;
 my hymn, my words, like bulls upon His altar.
 And may He show me Zion in her splendor,
 the royal city of my anointed king,
 and over it, two luminaries, equals:
 Messiah, son of David, and Elijah.
 May never enemy again divide her,
 or nomad pitch his tent in her again.

Translated by Raymond P. Scheindlin

REVIEWS

The Last Jews on Iberian Soil: Navarrese Jewry 1479/1498. By BENJAMIN R. GAMPEL. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989.

Reviewed by MARK D. MEYERSON

THE REIGN OF THE Catholic Monarchs, Isabel I of Castile and Fernando II of Aragon, was a period of great transition in the history of Spain and, indeed, of the world. One of the most significant developments of this reign was, of course, the final breakdown of the centuries-old Christian-Muslim-Jewish coexistence (or *convivencia*) that had made Spain distinct from its European neighbors. The signal events in this process of socio-religious transformation were the foundation of the Spanish Inquisition (1478-83), the conquest of the Islamic sultanate of Granada (1492), and the expulsion of the Jews (1492). In recent years, historians of Spain and its religious minorities increasingly have come to realize that this process was far more complex than it appears to be on the surface, and that generalizations about the necessities of the newly united Spanish State or the Spanish Catholic character have limited explanatory value. In order to gain fuller and more accurate understanding of Fernando and Isabel's reign, historians have begun to undertake needed local or regional studies, studies that analyze the state of Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations at the local level and the impact of royal policy measures on the life of these communities. Benjamin Gampel's *The Last Jews on Iberian Soil: Navarrese Jewry 1479/1498* is an important contribution of this kind, that focuses on a Jewish population left largely untouched by historians of this period.

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The Jews of Navarre are of special interest because they inhabited a kingdom distinct from Castile and Aragon, and, therefore, were not immediately or directly affected by Fernando and Isabel's policy toward their own Jewish subjects. This basic political fact explains the survival of Navarrese Jewry until March 1498, six years after the Jews of Castile and Aragon had been expelled. Yet, as Gampel shows, the considerable political power of the Catholic Monarchs and their involvement in Navarrese politics — indeed, Navarre would become part of Castile in 1513 — meant that the anomaly of Jewish existence in Navarre after 1492 could not continue for long. It is within this political setting of an independent Navarre being gradually drawn into the orbit of Castile and Aragon that Gampel tells the story of Navarrese Jewry between 1479 and 1498.

The research for this book is thorough and effectively utilizes the documentation which the author uncovered in royal, municipal, ecclesiastical, and notarial archives in a two-pronged approach to the history of Navarre's Jews. First he explores various aspects of the Jews' daily life, and then he treats what he calls "The Crisis in Iberian Society," that is, how developments external to Navarre itself impinged disastrously on the life of its Jews. Gampel's approach is both dramatic and appropriate, inasmuch as it rightly suggests that the religio-political goals of the Catholic monarchs were not necessarily shared by the district regional societies on which they imposed their will. Spain during the reign of Fernando and Isabel, it is important to remember, was more of a geographic expression than a political and social reality.

The book begins with a discussion of the size and distribution of the Navarrese Jewish population.

Utilizing sources from 1494-95, the author is able to estimate that, in a kingdom with a population of 100,000, there were approximately 3,550 Jews, although this figure includes the Jewish refugees from Castile and Aragon who had come to Navarre in 1492. Most Jews lived in important cities, such as Tudela, Olite, Tafalla, Estella, Pamplona, and Sangüesa; however, some made their homes in smaller towns and villages, like Cascante and Puente de la Reina. Within these cities and towns, even though the majority of the Jews resided in their special quarters, or *juderías*, some Jews lived interspersed among their Christian and Muslim neighbors. Such residential integration, always a source of anxiety to royal and ecclesiastical authorities, was a reflection of the Jews' integration into the regional economy.

Gampel's detailed account of Jewish economic activity reveals much about the Jews' daily life and the frequency and stability of their economic interaction with Christians and Muslims. While this kind of economic interdependence among members of the three faiths was by no means extraordinary, it is instructive for those who believe that Iberian *convivencia* had been rendered impossible or unworkable by the end of the fifteenth century. Indeed, Jewish economic life in Navarre remained varied and vibrant, not at all indicative of a community in decline. In the agricultural sector Jews bought, sold, and leased land — often from ecclesiastical institutions — and they raised crops, with viticulture as their most important agrarian pursuit. Jews also raised livestock and functioned as merchants of agricultural and pastoral products, like oil, wine, grain, fish, hides, and wool. Christians could be customers or partners, as when a Jewish fish merchant of Tudela rented out

stalls to Christian fishmongers and supplied them with fish. In the industrial sector Jews took part in the manufacture of, and trade in, clothing and jewelry. Navarre's Jews, not surprisingly, also played a key role in the lending of foodstuffs, textiles, and money. They supplied grain to Christian farmers in the form of consumption loans — that is, grain on which the farmer and his family would subsist until the next harvest — and hemp to garment manufacturers. Only a few Jews engaged in money lending; the loans were usually middle-sized and were made with an annual interest rate of twenty percent (the interest was often disguised in the contracts). Such loans were crucial to the functioning of the Navarrese economy, since they made available the capital needed for a wide range of commercial transactions at the economy's lower levels. Of course, the Jews, by providing this essential service, sometimes aroused the resentment of Christian debtors. Royal and municipal governments and ecclesiastical institutions continued to employ Jews in their fiscal administrations, although the Jews' role in the royal administration was less important than it had been in earlier centuries. Jews also served the municipalities as doctors and surgeons. In general, Gampel leaves us with a picture of a kingdom which, from an economic perspective at least, would not have been eager to lose its enterprising Jewish population.

Due to the nature of his sources, Gampel's treatment of the internal life of the Jewish community is unavoidably sketchy. Navarrese communities (or *aljamas*), like *aljamas* elsewhere in Spain, were governed by oligarchies of influential families whose members held most of the offices in the communal government. These *aljama* officials controlled the institutions that served the Jewish community —

synagogue, charity board, ritual baths, notary, and so on. The *aljama's* court administered justice according to Jewish law in civil suits between Jews, and in criminal cases involving Jewish informers (*malshinim*). Litigations pitting Jews against Christians or Muslims were adjudicated in the court of the Crown-appointed bailiff of the Jews and Muslims. Gampel concludes his account of Jewish communal life with an enumeration of the various royal and ecclesiastical taxes, both ordinary and extraordinary, incumbent on the Jews. Jewish communities always were vulnerable to the Crown's extraordinary fiscal demands and, indeed, the Navarrese civil war of the late fifteenth century caused a heavier taxation of the Jews. However, judging by Gampel's description of Jewish economic life, the tax burden was not a crushing one.

The second half of the book deals with the series of events that ended in March 1498 with the royal edict ordering the expulsion of all Jews from the kingdom of Navarre. Evident in all of these developments was the pressure increasingly exerted by Fernando and Isabel on Navarre's cities and its rulers, King Johan and Queen Catalina. Problems began in the fall of 1485, when Aragonese *conversos* (Jewish converts to Christianity) implicated in the assassination of the Inquisitor, Pedro de Arbués, in Saragossa, fled across the Navarrese border to Tudela. For the next two years the city of Tudela, and, from 1487, the town of Corella, resisted the efforts of Fernando and Isabel to send Inquisitorial officials to Navarre to apprehend and try the fugitive *conversos*. The Tudelans viewed the entry of the Inquisition into their city as a violation of their laws (*fueros*) and liberties. Moreover, Gampel argues, Tudelan *conversos* who held posts in municipal and ecclesiastical govern-

ment were influential in the city's decision to defy the Catholic monarchs. Ultimately, however, the Tudelans gave way before the determination of Fernando and Isabel, and in February, 1488, agreed to allow the Inquisition to investigate and proceed against any individuals in Navarre connected with cases pending before its tribunals.

The expulsion of the Jews from Castile and Aragon in 1492 — like the Inquisition, a measure of the Catholic monarchs' intent to solve the problem of judaizing *conversos*, in this case by ending *converso*-Jewish contact once and for all — had significant repercussions in the neighboring kingdom of Navarre. Just as many Castilian Jews fled to neighboring Portugal, Aragonese and Castilian Jews — some 1,700-1,800 according to Gampel's estimates — sought refuge in Navarre. Yet, in contrast to their willingness to harbor *converso* fugitives in 1485-88, the Christians of Tudela, and also of Tafalla, resisted the entry of the Jewish refugees. The author does not explain this difference between the Tudelans' reception of *conversos* and their rejection of Jews, nor, it seems to me, is his analysis of the Tudelans' motives in resisting the entry of the Jewish refugees fully convincing. Gampel cites the arguments of the Tudelans themselves — that the admission of the Jews "would be sacrilegious and cause political damage" (p. 97). Then, in agreement with the Tudelans' (and Tafallans') religious arguments and with the views of the nineteenth-century Navarrese historian Yanguas, Gampel concludes: "The spirit of religious intolerance and hatred of the Jews had become part of the fabric of Navarrese society" (p. 97). This assertion raises two questions. First, if these Jew-hating Tudelans were so concerned about "sacrilege," then why had they protected *converso* heretics involved in the murder of

an Inquisitor, for, certainly, harboring such criminals was as "sacrilegious" as admitting Jews? Second, how does this "hatred of the Jews" jibe with the picture of economic *convivencia* and mutual confidence painted by the author in earlier chapters? Gampel's second political argument is more convincing — that the Tudelans, who had already defied and then submitted to Fernando and Isabel's wishes regarding the activities of the Inquisition, were reluctant to anger the Catholic monarchs again and to cause political complications by receiving the expelled Jews. Indeed, the unwillingness of other Navarrese cities to join Tudela in its efforts to bar Jewish entry raises further questions about the alleged growing hatred of the Jews throughout Navarre, and lends support to the argument that the Tudelans' motives were primarily political.

In any case, notwithstanding the Tudelan and Tafallan opposition, the Navarrese rulers permitted the Aragonese and Castilian Jews to enter their kingdom. They hoped to profit from the economic and fiscal benefits of an increased Jewish presence. Here Gampel launches into a fascinating account of the life of Castilian and Aragonese Jewish refugees in Navarre between 1492 and 1498. These Jews settled in Tudela, Sangüesa, Pamplona, and smaller urban centers, and they also made new homes on the lands of Navarrese nobles. They formed communities separate from those of their Navarrese brethren, and from 1494 the Crown made an administrative distinction between them, the *judíos foranos*, and the Navarrese, the *judíos nativos*, and taxed both communities in the same way. While the expelled Jews were re-establishing themselves in Navarre, they still had unfinished business to resolve in Castile and Aragon. Often it in-

volved claims to property left behind or to debts owed to them in their former homes. Sometimes it entailed disputes over property and inheritances with relatives who had converted in 1492.

In his final chapter, "The Road to Expulsion," Gampel aptly places developments in Navarre in a wider Iberian context, and draws our attention to the growing influence of Fernando and Isabel in Navarrese affairs after 1488. He argues plausibly that the various anti-Jewish measures of Fernando and Isabel — the legislation of the Castilian Cortes of Toledo (1480) that called for the placing of the Jews in separate quarters to impede their communication with *conversos*; the expulsion of the Jews from Andalusia, where the *conversos* problem was most grave; the establishment of the Inquisition in Castile and Aragon; and the expulsion of the Jews from their realms — "emboldened other elements in Navarrese society to become outspokenly anti-Jewish" (p. 123). Hence, in 1488, the Navarrese monarchs ordered the segregation of the Jews of Corella, according, they claimed, to the wishes of the municipality. Moreover, in 1488, 1490, 1493, and 1496 the Cortes of Navarre complained about Jewish moneylenders and tax-collectors, and in 1492 forbade Jews to leave their *juderías* and houses until midday on Sundays and church festivals.

Yet, here again we are left wondering about the relationship between this anti-Jewish activity and the picture of economic *convivencia* drawn previously, an apparent contradiction which the author does not explicitly address. However, considering that in Iberian history such complaints about Jewish usury and tax-collection and such segregative legislation were neither new nor unusual, and that ideological tension and occasional ethnic violence were integral to the social

formula of *convivencia*, the contradiction between the articulation of anti-Jewish sentiment and the daily economic, and presumably social, interaction of Christians and Jews is perhaps more apparent than real. The question is not whether there was Christian hostility toward the Jews, but whether that hostility had reached a level such as to make Christian-Jewish co-existence impossible. One would have to agree with Maurice Kriegel (*Revue historique* 260 [1978]: 49-90) that in the Spain of the Catholic monarchs such a critical level had not been reached. Indeed, Gampel's account of the continuous economic interchange between Navarrese Jews and Christians, despite the complaints about the Jews voiced by the Cortes, substantiates this conclusion. In other words, the expulsions of the Jews from Castile-Aragon and from Navarre were not the result of the agitation of the Christian populace against the Jews but were measures taken by the monarchs for specific religious and political reasons. In the case of Fernando and Isabel, the decision to expel the Jews stemmed from their desire to bring an end to *converso* judaizing by removing all possible Jewish influences on the *conversos*. Johan and Catalina of Navarre, as

Gampel rightly concludes, decided to expel their Jews in 1498 "not because of the native hatred of the Jews on the part of other Navarrese, but if only to demonstrate to Ferdinand and Isabella that they need not invade the kingdom" (p. 129) — that is, they did so for political reasons.

After the proclamation of the expulsion edict, the large majority of the Jews in Navarre, natives and refugees, converted to Christianity. Because Navarre was a landlocked kingdom and Jews were not permitted to enter Castile and Aragon, the Jews in Navarre had little choice. Some, however, did manage to escape the peninsula, and settled throughout the Mediterranean, just as many Spanish Jews had done in 1492.

In sum, Benjamin Gampel's carefully researched study is a valuable contribution to the history of Spanish Jewry and to the history of the age of Fernando and Isabel. Not only does it provide us with a balanced and dramatic account of Navarre Jewry during its last years in the Iberian peninsula; it also gives us another piece of the puzzle of that complex process of socio-religious transformation which Spain experienced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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